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American
Food
City**

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Issue 175
June/July 2015



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THE GRILLING ISSUE

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JUNE/JULY

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THE NEW GRILLING ESSENTIALS

Seven experts share their most trusted grilling techniques and favorite summer recipes, including a brisket burger, char-smoked ribs, and a stop-you-in-your-tracks seafood tower.

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By Matt Lee and Ted Lee

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At a big backyard blowout, Houston chef Chris Shepherd showcases flavors from the city's immigrant communities in an Asian-style Texas feast.

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On a stunning remote island off the coast of Washington, simplicity reigns supreme as chef Blaine Wetzel makes delicious use of the seasonal offerings from land and sea.

By Adam Sachs

Cover photograph by Joseph De Leo; food styling by Susan Spungen

Oysters blend in with the coals that cook them on remote Lummi Island, off the Pacific coast (see page 72 for story).

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Join us on June 23 for the Saveur Summer Cookout, our huge outdoor party in NYC. Purchase tickets at saveur.com/summercookout.

Experts reveal their **well-guarded grilling secrets** beginning on [page 44](#), and there are more cooking tips at saveur.com/grilling.

Like Molly Yeh's **revamped recipe for North Dakota cookie salad** ([page 33](#))? Try the old-school version at saveur.com/cookiesalad.

Summer spritzes ([page 28](#)) aren't the only warm-weather drinks we love. For more, visit saveur.com/summercocktails.


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Chef Chris Shepherd of Houston's Underbelly serves up mustard-glazed ham ribs (see page 67 for recipe) at an all-day Texas cookout.



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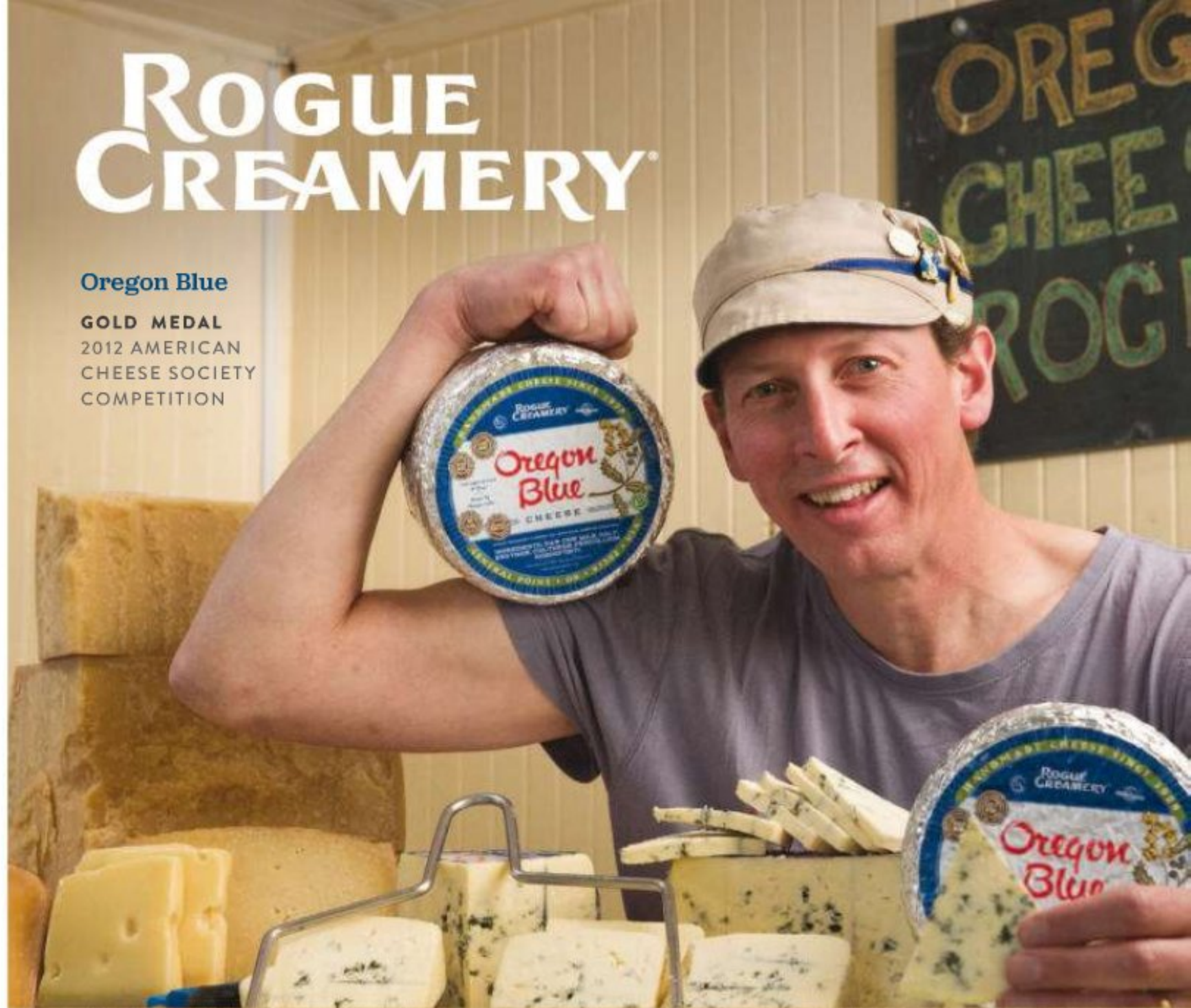
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How to Grill a Strawberry

Recipes don't usually appear in an editor's letter. But then, this isn't a recipe so much as it is a general theory about the pleasures of grilling things that don't usually get grilled, in this case strawberries.

The theory goes something like this: The best thing about cooking with fire isn't the bright, mesmerizing dance of the flames or the hiss and pop of the wood as it burns. The best things happen when the fire's died down. When the charcoal's burnt to embers and a bit of oak or applewood smolders, releasing its faint curls of smoke—this is when things get interesting.

The aftermath of a blaze offers angles and opportunities. I wrap heads of garlic in foil and bury them to slow-roast in the coolest part of the ash. With patience, a large piece of meat like the bone-in behemoth on our cover (see [page 48](#) for recipe) develops a burnished, beautiful exterior. The key: lots of turning and a longer-than-you-think-you-can-wait rest at the end. Or, you can throw things—turnips, onions, or eggplants, say—directly onto the coals. I was inspired to see Blaine Wetzel, a very talented young chef from the Pacific Northwest (see “The American Archipelago,” [page 72](#)), cook oysters this way.

But my favorite thing to grill these days is strawberries. Here's the non-recipe: Grill whatever you're making for dinner, then after you've served your guests but before you sit down to feed yourself, set two pounds of hulled strawberries on the grates over

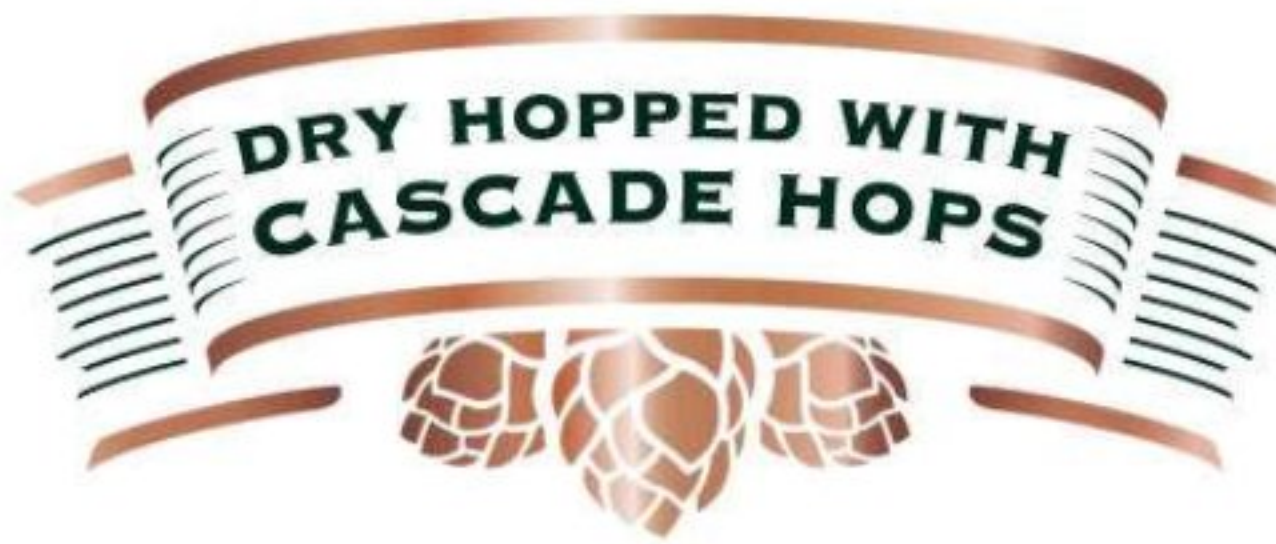
very mellowed charcoals. (Sure, you can do this on a gas or electric grill, but the results won't be the same and I don't think it's worth it.) If you've got a little wood, put it over the coals so it steadily smokes. Every now and then get up from the table and roll the berries around, allowing them to soak up the smoke and gentle heat. Take your time. You don't want grill marks. You want slow transformation—from the bright red of the fresh fruit to something darker, plumper, different. Drink some wine. Talk to your friends. In the meantime, cook down whatever red wine you don't drink in a pot (let three cups reduce to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup). Stir a few tablespoons of blackberry jam into the wine, or some honey if you prefer it. After a half hour or so, the strawberries will have cooked through and turned a deep crimson. You can eat them right off the grill, but they're even better tossed with a bit of the wine reduction and served over vanilla ice cream. The taste of smoke, the touch of sweet wine, the ice cream melting under the hot wrinkly berries—trust me. It's really good.

Adam

Adam Sachs

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THE PIONEER FROM GERMANY

Agenda

June/July 2015

Where There's Smoke (We Are Happy)

AN ODE TO THE ETERNAL ALLURE OF SUMMER'S MOST PRIMAL SCENT BY FRANCINE PROSE

Our sense of smell is strongly connected to the part of the brain that governs memory and emotion—a bridge between neuroscience and poetry. That would explain the flood of feeling that comes over us when we smell smoke, the seductive aroma of food being cooked on a fire. It reaches back to our earliest memories and possibly further back still, to some primal part of our psyches that knows: This is how the world smelled when our ancestors made dinner. When I try to imagine the lives of the cave dwellers, or the daily routine of a postlapsarian Adam and Eve, what comes to mind is the scent of meat roasting over a flame, calling the

hunter home from the hunt, the gatherer home from the wild berry patch: Food's on! Nothing except a gorgeous face, outfit, or dog can so sharply turn our heads as we walk down the street. Nothing so inspires us to follow our noses to the food truck, the backyard barbecue, the parking lot where someone's smoking brisket in a metal drum. The tendrils of smoke reach out and pluck us from our reveries. (Of course, hidden deep in that smell is also the implicit hint of danger, a pulse-quickenning, elemental shriek of *volcano!* Or *house on fire!* But generations of flame tamers have quieted all that.) The aroma of fresh baked bread is attractive, but we can't see the effusions of the bakery the way we can see smoke. Its

smell and sight—and the promise of taste—excites a range of nerve endings at once. It's the perfect synesthetic experience.

I happily enter houses and restaurants where I know that someone in the kitchen is working magic with a grill. Desperate, in an airport, I can easily succumb to the smokelike aura of the pulled-pork stand. But it's not the same as smoke outdoors. The memory trigger is specific: childhood picnics, barbecues. The smell of smoke reminds me of home—our two sons serving as grill masters at our country house—and of travel: carnitas cooking over an open flame in a village in Morelia, Mexico. The smoke of cooking in the bright warm air—that's the smell of summer.

CHRISTINA HOLMES



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Agenda

The Science of Smoke

HAROLD MCGEE ON THE FACTS BEHIND
THIS ESSENTIAL BUT ETHEREAL INGREDIENT

Smoke is a funny thing. Light as air, it floats up in a fragrant plume and then drifts away, bestowing the taste of wood in its wake. So what exactly is this aromatic, elemental thing that can deeply flavor meat or subtly transform cold-smoked salmon? We asked noted food scientist Harold McGee to shed some light on its strange alchemy.

How it behaves

"In combustion, very large molecules break down into lots of very small ones. Those tiny aromatic products fly through the air and end up in our noses and on the surface of food. Just the same way moisture condenses on a cold glass in summertime, the volatile molecules of the smoke vapor condense on the food."

How it preserves

"In the combustion cocktail of hundreds of volatile molecules in smoke, there are phenols, which are disinfectants like those used in hospitals to kill germs. Eugenol is also present, a compound that also has strong antibacterial qualities. These molecules settle on the surface of food, where molds and bacteria are deposited, and serve as a shield against spoilage and disease-causing microbes."

What it smells like

"The smell of cloves is a common byproduct of combustion. Vanillin—the main aromatic component of vanilla—is sometimes found in smoke, too. You can recognize these flavors in wines that have been aged in toasted barrels, which is essentially smoking the inside of the barrel."

How it flavors

"Aroma molecules don't diffuse into the meat very far. If you're barbecuing for hours, some permeation will occur. But it will be in the outer millimeters of the food only. Gases like nitric oxide, which gives you smoke rings, can get in, but the flavors themselves really can't."

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Agenda


Fullsteam brewery in Durham, North Carolina, smokes barley with hickory wood for its beers.



Best Beers for Barbecue

ADVENTUROUS AMERICAN PRODUCERS ARE CRAFTING SMOKY, MEAT-FRIENDLIER BREWS

BY WILLIAM BOSTWICK

S smoked beers are not entirely new. Time was, before coal and gas kilns, all brewers cured their fresh grains over burning wood. As production modernized, beer's heady fumes dissipated, except in the German city of Bamberg, where *rauchbier*, as it's called there, lived on, made in ovens fired with fragrant beech.

Today's new smoked beers are made the same way, with wet kernels of barley slowly dried over wood fires. The difference is that instead of using only beech, American brewers are smoking with local hardwood to create beers as varied as the nation's regional barbecue styles. Fullsteam brewery, in Durham, North Carolina, makes a brown porter, Hogwash, with grains that are smoked using the state's trademark hickory. Most pitmasters would never pair their meticulously smoked meat with strong, full-flavored brews, but chasing eastern North Carolina barbecue with Hogwash amplifies the meat's subtly sweet wood flavor and mellows its tangy vinegar sauce.

"Smoky beer with barbecue is the path less traveled, for sure," says Sean Lilly Wilson, founder of

Fullsteam. Bucking the notion that barbecue's accompaniments should be secondary—plain white bread, paper plates, pitchers of light, forgettable beer—brewers like Fullsteam, Fort Point in San Francisco, and Alaskan Brewing Co. in Juneau are not just smoking beer, but insisting it be paired with the country's best smoked meat.

Other breweries are teaming up with smokehouses for special-collaboration beers, smoking their grain with the same type of wood used to barbecue the meat. Los Angeles' Bruery uses white oak for the Mrs. Stoutfire imperial stout served at Beachwood BBQ, and Woods Beer Co. flavored the Almond Rye brewed for Perdition Smokehouse in Berkeley, California, with—what else—almond wood. Spoiled for choice in central Texas, the brewers at Jester King worked with new-school favorite Franklin Barbecue for the Figlet, a farmhouse ale made with local figs smoked over oak. But it's not just the upstarts that are embracing smoky beers: Hill Country legend Salt Lick also partnered with Jester King on another farmhouse ale using malt smoked over pecan wood in the smokehouse's own pits.



Five Smoked Brews to Try

Stone Smoked Porter

5.9% ABV
Escondido, California

Stone's was one of the first American-made *rauchbiers* when it debuted in the '90s. Today, the company offers experimental spin-offs flavored with chiles or vanilla.

Fort Point Manzanita

6.3% ABV
San Francisco

German tradition with a homegrown twist: A classic tawny, malty-sweet brew, called an "alt" (old) for its long, mellow aging, gets some local flavor from charred manzanita branches.

Alaskan Smoked Porter

6.5% ABV
Juneau, Alaska

This dark beer from Alaskan Brewing Co. has hints of spicy alder smoke that mellows with time. Vintage bottles are bacony and sweet like charred plum.

Uncommon Bacon Brown Ale

6.8% ABV
Santa Cruz, California

Nutty and crisp, thanks to roasted buckwheat, this experimental beer gets its smoky character not from grain but from a cured hog leg steeped in each batch.

Fullsteam Hogwash

5.4% ABV
Durham, North Carolina

For this lighter brown porter, North Carolina-grown barley is smoked over the state's famous hickory—its tingly fumes fade into a subtly sweet toffee finish.

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DIY "LIQUID SMOKE"

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First manufactured as "condensed smoke" in 1895 by Missouri pharmacist Ernest H. Wright, liquid smoke is bottled magic: It adds a quick hit of grill flavor, no gear necessary. And you can make it (or fake it, rather) at home. The industrial method for producing it is a cross between the strange wonder of a chemistry lab and a barbecue—wood is burned, the smoke vapors are caught in a chamber, and then they're cooled into a liquid. Chris Young, one of the founders of science-y cooking website ChefSteps.com, has a smart way to bypass the need for a big smoker. The trick is to use smoked salt and a mixture of solvents that will extract the smoke aromas. Young starts by mixing a neutral oil into the smoked salt and then adding just enough vodka to capture the smoke aroma from the salt without dissolving it. The result is a pure smoke oil, without a vodka or salt taste. He favors Bonfire smoked salt, which has a bold flavor that's easy to extract.

SMOKE-FLAVORED OIL

MAKES ½ CUP

Bring ½ cup canola oil, 2 tbsp. Bonfire smoked sea salt, and 1 tsp. vodka to a simmer in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium, 2-3 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand 1 hour, stirring occasionally, to allow flavors to meld. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve, discarding salt. Store in an airtight container; the mixture will keep indefinitely.

Brush smoke-flavored oil onto grilled corn, mix it with mayonnaise for potato salad or a burger condiment, add a few drops to salad dressing, or blend it into chocolate ice cream.



A SMOKER FOR THE SPACE-CHALLENGED

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Applewood-smoked **Regalis steelhead roe** (1 oz. for \$18; open sky.com) has a delightful pop of brine and smoke—a superb match for eggs, blini, or baked potatoes.



Wrapped in maple leaves spritzed with bourbon, the **Rivers Edge Chèvre Up in Smoke** (4 oz. for \$16; murrayscheese.com) mingles fresh creaminess with the aroma of charred alder.

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Agenda

Make an entirely homemade s'more (it's worth it), or mix and match components with store-bought ingredients.

Campfire Confection

Pastry chef Mindy Segal has made a successful career out of tinkering with, and improving, classic desserts. At her Chicago restaurant HotChocolate (and in her book, *Cookie Love*, from Ten Speed Press), she rejiggers icons like pineapple upside-down cake and baked Alaska with thoughtful, contemporary updates. So we gave her a challenge: Take the s'more, that beloved summer bonfire dessert assembled from store-bought components, and make it even better. Here's her fantastic homemade version.

"I love brown butter," says Segal. "It gives more depth to the dough. I add graham crumbs to it for crunch. You can also use the dough for pie crusts."

SMOKED ALMOND S'MORES WITH WHISKEY MARSHMALLOWS

MAKES 30; COOK TIME: 3 HOURS

For the graham shortbreads:

- 20 tbsp. (2 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter
- 2 cups graham cracker crumbs
- 1 cup all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 1 cup cake flour
- 1 tsp. Maldon flake sea salt
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 3/4 cup brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

For the marshmallows:

- Unsalted butter, for greasing
- 8 sheets gelatin (amazon.com)
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 2 egg whites
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup bourbon
- 2 tbsp. light corn syrup
- 1 tbsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup confectioners' sugar



Agenda

For the chocolate squares:

- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter, plus more for greasing
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 tsp. light corn syrup
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 10 oz. bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
- 10 oz. milk chocolate, finely chopped
- 3/4 cup smoked almonds, roughly chopped

1 Make the graham shortbreads: Melt butter over medium; cook, stirring, until deep golden brown, 8-10 minutes. Pour into a heatproof bowl and refrigerate until solid. Bring butter to room temperature. Whisk graham cracker crumbs, flours, and salts in a bowl. Combine butter and brown sugar in a large bowl; beat on medium-high speed with a hand mixer until smooth and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add dry ingredients and vanilla; beat on low speed until just

combined. Divide dough in half and wrap in plastic wrap; refrigerate for 2 hours. Heat oven to 350°. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into an 11"x13" rectangle, about 1/8" thick. Cut dough into 2" squares and bake on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet, rotating halfway, until golden, 15 minutes. Cool.

2 Make the marshmallows: Grease a 9"x13" baking dish and line with parchment paper; grease parchment and set aside. Place gelatin in 4 cups cold water until soft, 5 minutes. Using an electric hand mixer, beat salt and egg whites until stiff peaks form. Meanwhile, heat sugar, bourbon, corn syrup, and vanilla in a 4-qt. saucepan until a candy thermometer reaches 245°, 5-7 minutes. Squeeze water from gelatin and stir into syrup until dissolved; slowly stream syrup down side of bowl into egg whites while beating, avoiding the whisk. Continue beating egg whites on high speed until glossy and cool to the touch, about 5 minutes. Spread marshmallow into prepared baking dish in an even layer and refrigerate 2 hours. Dust work surface with

confectioners' sugar and unmold marshmallow; cut into 2" cubes and store in an airtight container until ready to use.

3 Make the chocolate squares: Line 2 baking sheets with foil and grease; set aside. Heat butter, sugar, corn syrup, salt, vanilla, and 1 tbsp. water in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium. Cook, without stirring, until it turns dark gold, 10-12 minutes; pour onto prepared baking sheet and cool. Break toffee into 1/2" pieces. Melt chocolates in a saucepan over medium; add reserved toffee pieces and almonds and stir to combine. Spread into an even layer on prepared baking sheet; cool slightly, then score into 2" squares. Cool completely, then break into squares.

4 Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill; skewer marshmallows with sticks and heat over the flame, rotating as needed, until golden and charred, 2-3 minutes. Place one marshmallow on a shortbread with a chocolate square; top with another shortbread and eat immediately.

“When the smoky, charred marshmallow melts the brittle onto the **brown-buttery graham cracker, it’s a win-win-win.”**

-Mindy Segal, HotChocolate

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Middle of Somewhere

RESPECTFUL OF TRADITION BUT NOT BOUND BY IT, ONCE-SLEEPY CENTRAL NORTH CAROLINA DEVELOPS ITS OWN FOOD SCENE

By Rachel Wharton

I have always thought of the North Carolina Piedmont, where I grew up, as the state's under-appreciated middle child. Its 18th-century mill towns and cities—Durham, Chapel Hill, Charlotte—are sandwiched in the center between the more famous mountains, home to ever-funky Asheville, and the gorgeous coastal plains, with its beaches and dunes and fancy houses on the Outer Banks.

I was raised in the booming state capital of Raleigh, a city that sprawls outward from old streets lined with oaks and lacy Victorian porches. When I was young, those who came through the area usually had practical reasons: government careers, a stop at the area's top-tier universities, a job in one of the glassy sci-tech engineering complexes. Savvy tourists headed for the rest of the state, if not to Charleston or Atlanta. The culinary hallmarks of plain-Jane Piedmont were straightforward fare, like barbecue, pimento cheese, and slaw-topped hot dogs. Recently, though, I've watched Piedmont become one of the South's most exciting places to eat, partially because so few people have been paying attention.

"There's a vibrancy to the food scene here because we are less afraid of messing up or stepping out of line," says April McGreger, the founder of Farmer's

Daughter Brand pickles and preserves, all made by hand in the artsy community of Hillsborough. A former pastry chef under Andrea Reusing at Lantern in Chapel Hill (once the only contemporary restaurant known outside the region), McGreger notes a distinct difference between Piedmont cooking and the cuisine in Louisiana or her native Mississippi, where food with a developed storyline has long been a draw. There is "less clinging to tradition," she observes, drawing a comparison to the Piedmont-style blues of the early 20th century, a blend of fingerpicking and ragtime rhythms. "No one cares that we are doing it 'right'; they just care that we are doing it 'good.'"

Like McGreger's fig and muscadine grape jam (both fruits that flourish in Piedmont's flower-filled backyards) or pickled sweet-potato greens (grown on a farm tended by Burmese refugees), the best things from the region tend to tease deliciousness from a loose intersection of custom, discovery, and craft.

Near the tiny town of Pittsboro (pop. 3,700, home of the North Carolina Zen Center), Chicken Bridge Bakery makes wood-fired, yeasted cornbreads and sourdough from locally milled flour. In even smaller Saxapahaw—a revitalized riverfront village with a hippie-meets-hipster vibe—Left Bank Butchery sells pho made with beef from local cattle and *ciccioli* with pork rinds that is Italian in lineage but Carolina in spirit.

At Raleigh's Garland, one of many new restaurants in that city's once-dead downtown, chef Cheetie Kumar blends her Indian heritage with her Southern surroundings in dishes like ghee-griddled corn-and-poblano cakes topped with a tandoor-onion compote and a roasted tomato vinaigrette.

"It's not 'down home' Southern, but more of what we think of as N.C. cooking today," says former Umstead Hotel chef Scott Crawford, who notes that

For more information about these Piedmont food destinations, visit saveur.com/piedmont-nc.

From left: A bartender at Poole's Diner in Raleigh; April McGreger of Farmer's Daughter uses strawberries from Eco Farm in Chapel Hill for her preserves; artisanal granola and breads from Chicken Bridge Bakery are on sale at a market in Carrboro.

ANGIE MOSIER, LISSA GOTWALLS, CHICKEN BRIDGE BAKERY

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the region has long been one of the South's most progressive areas. When he opens Nash Tavern in Raleigh next year, he'll fry collard croquettes, serve mussels with ham bone broth, and bake a modified chocolate chess pie dressed with crumbles of crunchy masa (see recipe below).

The marvel here isn't that Crawford gets his chocolate around the corner, but that his collards are still grown nearby. "We are in the middle of such agricultural diversity," says James Beard Award-winning chef Ashley Christensen, a Piedmont native who opened Poole's Diner in Raleigh in 2007. Her perch near the center of the state means she cooks with both foraged goods from the foggy foothills and still-wriggling seafood from the nearby coast.

The region's real appeal lies in home-spun operations like Heritage Food & Drink in Waxhaw, a still-rural community that lured veteran Charlotte chef Paul Verica nearly two years ago. Having renovated a "little mom and pop" lunch counter on Main Street, he can now cook exactly what he wants, be it English peas and country ham in clarified potlikker, Korean-style beef with *ponzu* and North Carolina peanuts, or, because why not, good ol' pulled pork and pimento cheese.

Chocolate Chess Pie with Cornbread Crumble

SERVES 8; COOK TIME: 1 HOUR, PLUS 3 HOURS CHILLING

Chef Scott Crawford of the forthcoming Nash Tavern in Raleigh updates the simple Southern custard pie by adding cacao nibs to the butter crust and sprinkling a nutty cornbread crumble on top.

For the cacao nib crust:

- 1½ cups flour, plus more for dusting
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 12 tbsp. unsalted butter, cubed and chilled
- 6 tbsp. cacao nibs
- 2 tbsp. ice-cold water

For the cornbread crumble:

- ¾ cup brown sugar
- ¾ cup masa harina
- ¼ cup fine cornmeal
- ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- 10 tbsp. unsalted butter, cubed and chilled

For the chocolate custard:

- 1¼ cups sugar
- ½ cup cornstarch
- 6 tbsp. cocoa powder
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 6 eggs
- 2½ cups milk
- 1¼ cups heavy cream
- 5 oz. semisweet chocolate, roughly chopped

1 Make the crust: Combine flour, sugar, and salt in a food processor; add butter and pulse until pea-size crumbles form. Add cacao nibs and water; pulse into a smooth dough. Flatten into a disk; wrap in plastic wrap and chill 3 hours.

2 Heat oven to 375°. On a lightly floured surface, roll dough into a 12" circle; fit into a 9" pie plate. Trim edges and crimp; chill 30 minutes. Using a fork, prick the dough all over; line with parchment paper

and fill with pie weights; bake 15 minutes. Remove paper and weights; cook 15 minutes more.

3 Make the crumble: Heat oven to 300°. Combine sugar, flour, cornmeal, and salt in a food processor and pulse until combined; add butter and pulse until pea-size crumbles form. Transfer to a parchment paper-lined baking sheet and bake until golden brown, 30 minutes. Break up into coarse crumbs, then cool.

4 Make the custard: In a 4-qt. saucepan, whisk sugar, cornstarch, cocoa powder, salt, and eggs until smooth; stir in milk and cream. Cook over medium until thickened, 10–12 minutes. Stir in chocolate until melted, then pass custard through a fine sieve. Pour into cooled pie crust and top with crumble. Chill before serving.

You can use the pie's leftover cornbread crumble (it freezes well) on ice cream, baked fruit, or parfaits.



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FEELING FIZZY

On the **SPRITZ**

These bright, bubbly, batchable
aperitivo cocktails are the
breeziest of summer drinks

BY TALIA BAIOCCHI AND
LESLIE PARISEAU



Spritzes are the cocktail world's rumpled linen button-down: unfussy warm-weather favorites with Italian style to spare. More a method than a kind of drink, spritzing was, as the mythos goes, born in Hapsburg-occupied northern Italy in the 19th century. It was there that Austrian soldiers introduced the practice of diluting the region's wines with a squirt (or *spritz*) of water to make them more pleasing to their Riesling-trained palates. Today, Italians knock back the wine-based effervescent cocktails—chief among them, prosecco tinted orange-red with the bittersweet liqueur Aperol—during the pre-dinner *aperitivo* hour. In America, the fatuous white wine spritzer appeared as a sort of halfhearted diet fad in the 1980s, but has since been reimagined as a chic prelude to eating or a softer alternative to heavier-hitting drinks. Whipped up with just a few ingredients, the spritz has a Technicolor genius that lies in its I-woke-up-like-this simplicity. Make your base in a large batch and set it out in a pitcher alongside a bubbly mixer for guests to add as they please. The long, lean drinks will shepherd you through the golden evening hours with ease.

Talia Baiocchi (right) and Leslie Pariseau (left), editor-in-chief and deputy editor of the online magazine *Punch*, have a book about the spritz due out next spring from Ten Speed Press.



Everything's Coming Up Rosé

SERVES 4-6

Natasha David, head bartender of New York City's Nitecap, grew up in Germany, where everything from wine to apple juice got *gespritzt*. Her bright fuchsia *aperitivo* mixes tannic hibiscus tea, sweet Lillet Rosé, and dry rosé with a hit of prosecco.

- 1½ cups dry rosé wine
- ¾ cup brewed hibiscus tea, chilled
- ¾ cup Lillet Rosé
- ⅓ cup plus 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice, plus wheels for garnish
- ⅓ cup plus 1 tbsp. simple syrup
- 3 tbsp. Aperol
- Sparkling wine, for serving
- Edible flowers, for garnish
- Grapefruit slices, for garnish

Combine wine, tea, Lillet, lemon juice, simple syrup, and Aperol in a pitcher. Divide between 4-6 ice-filled glasses and top each with 1-2 oz. sparkling wine. Garnish with lemon wheels, edible flowers, and grapefruit slices.

Lady Stoneheart

SERVES 4-6

For this ode to the *Game of Thrones* noblewoman, Erick Castro of San Diego's Polite Provisions softens Punt e Mes—the dark and bitter quina-vermouth hybrid—with a long pour of champagne.

- ½ cup Punt e Mes
- ¼ cup simple syrup
- 12 dashes Angostura bitters
- Champagne, for serving
- Orange twists, for garnish

Combine Punt e Mes, simple syrup, and bitters in a pitcher; refrigerate until ready to use. Pour ¾-1 oz. mixture into 4-6 coupe glasses. Top each with 2-3 oz. champagne; garnish with orange twists.



Best Ways to Add BUBBLES

PROSECCO

Its clean, light, fruit-forward flavors make prosecco the ideal candidate for mixing. Bisol, Adami, and Nino Franco all produce widely available, high-quality versions.

SODA WATER

Maximum sparkle is key, and, for that, Canada Dry's aggressive bubbles do the job. If you have a SodaStream, the spritz is your oyster: Carbonate your water to the highest level, and then carbonate it again for a little extra oomph.

THE ALTERNATIVES

Although prosecco or soda water is traditionally what puts the spritz in a spritz, anything with a little CO₂ will do the trick.

For a double-bitter kick, **tonic water** (we like Fever-Tree) is a good match for oloroso sherry or dry vermouth.

The red-fruit flavors and tannic bubbles in **lambrusco** (like Lini 910) work well with herbal amaro.

Funky Basque or more polished Norman **ciders** play nice with salty manzanilla or fino sherries.

Instead of **champagne**, try the more affordable *crémant d'alsace* (such as Dirlé-Cadé, Albert Mann, or Barmès-Buecher).

Moto Guzzi

SERVES 4-6

Named after the motorcycle brand, this Aperol spritz riff (pictured below left), from Atlanta's Greg Best, subs Cappelletti *aperitivo*, a red-wine-based aperitif, for Aperol.

- 1 cup Cappelletti aperitivo
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice, plus twists for garnish
- 2 tsp. honey mixed with 1/2 tsp. hot water
- Prosecco, for serving
- Freshly ground black pepper, for serving

Combine aperitivo, lemon juice, and honey syrup in a pitcher. Divide between 4-6 ice-filled glasses and top each with 3-4 oz. prosecco. Garnish with lemon twists and a pinch of pepper.

Rosé All Day

SERVES 4-6

Bartenders Gabriel Orta and Elad Zvi of The Broken Shaker in Miami Beach put a tropi-

cal spin on the Italian original (pictured below center) with a homemade papaya shrub.

- 1 1/2 cups rosé wine
- 3/4 cup Cocchi Americano
- 3/4 cup papaya shrub (recipe follows)
- 1/3 cup plus 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice, plus wheels for garnish
- Prosecco, for serving
- Mint sprigs, for garnish

Combine wine, Cocchi Americano, shrub, and lemon juice in a pitcher. Divide between 4-6 ice-filled wine glasses and top each with 1-2 oz. prosecco. Garnish with lemon wheels and mint sprigs.

For the papaya shrub:

Bring 1 cup rice vinegar, 2 tbsp. sugar, and 1/2 peeled, seeded papaya, cut into 1/2" pieces, to a simmer in a 2-qt. saucepan. Reduce heat to very low and cook until papaya is very soft, 30 minutes. Remove from heat and cool completely; strain

into an airtight container, pressing on solids to extract flavor, and refrigerate until ready to use or up to 2 weeks.

Punch House Spritz

SERVES 4-6

Everyone should have a house spritz, whose proportions are known by heart and ingredients are stocked easily, like this one (pictured below right) from Talia Baiocchi and Leslie Pariseau.

- 3 cups lambrusco rosé, preferably Lini 910 Lambrusco Rosato
- 1 1/2 cups Cocchi Americano
- 3/4 cup fresh grapefruit juice, plus halved wheels for garnish
- Soda water, for serving

Combine lambrusco, Cocchi Americano, and juice in a pitcher. Divide between 4-6 ice-filled glasses and top each with 1-2 oz. soda water. Garnish with grapefruit wheels.

PITCHER THIS

Serve batched spritzes in sleek containers, like the recycled glass pitcher, center (\$35; theprimaryessentials.com), or the trap pitcher, right (\$13; cb2.com).



RULES of the Spritz

- 1 **Don't sweat the measurements.** The easygoing spritz is improvisational (and forgiving) by nature.
- 2 **Keep it bitter.** Bitterness sparks appetite—the point of a spritz. Choose an *aperitivo* that is boldly bitter (Campari, Cynar) or more mellow (Cocchi Americano, Aperol, Cappelletti).
- 3 **The more bubbles, the better.** If your spritz loses its sparkle, what's the point? Add another splash of soda, prosecco, or tonic whenever things are feeling flat.
- 4 **Give it body.** A spritz should be light on its feet but should also have viscosity. Use fruit liqueurs (such as Giffard) or syrups to add complexity and weight.
- 5 **Beware of getting spritz-faced.** They go down easily. So do as the Italians do and take yours with little nibbles.



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Cookie Salad Country, U.S.A.

A MOVE TO NORTH DAKOTA CHALLENGES A BROOKLYN
FOOD BLOGGER'S CULINARY EXPERTISE

by Molly Yeh



The summer I moved to the Midwest to live on my now-husband's family farm was the summer that my perception of salad was turned upside down, held firmly by the ankles, and shaken free of all the vegetables that were hiding in its pockets.

It happened quickly and unexpectedly in a buffet line outside of Fargo, North Dakota. I inspected a pale glob of what I was told was salad. It was white and fluffy and came from a plastic bucket; what appeared to be chocolate bars peeked out at me like the curious small-town friends I hadn't yet made.

Cookie salad, I later learned, is a Midwest specialty: a mix of crushed cookies and mandarin oranges, held together by Cool Whip and pudding and not an ounce of shame. It has nothing to do with vegetables. I couldn't tell you what that first cookie salad tasted like because I didn't eat it out of fear that I would like it and would one day have to buy Cool Whip in public.

At the end of this first semester of my new Midwestern life, the final exam came in the form of *lefse*, a Christmastime flatbread that's practically sacred to the Norwegian descendants who populate this region. Making it requires multiple days and a very long wooden stick, preferably one that was whittled 100 years ago by an ancestor named Thorvald. To help me with my first attempt, I called on my now great-aunt-in-law Ethel, who calmed me down when I questioned my potential to be a Midwest farm wife and sobbed over my makeshift *lefse* grill, which I had fashioned out of an upside-down cast-iron pan.

Turns out I just wasn't adding enough flour.

As word spread across town that I had used sweet potato in lieu of the standard red potato for my first-ever *lefse*, I felt the burn of the Midwest's subtle side-eye. But that *lefse* got Grandma's seal of approval, and an engagement ring came soon after. Suddenly my future as a Midwesterner didn't feel so out of reach.

One winter evening right before our wedding, my soon-to-be husband came home with freshly ground venison from our neighbor Tom. As I browned it and piled it atop a cauliflower fritter, I got the rundown on our supper: The deer was shot one day prior, in the thick of hunting season, by Tom's 11-year-old granddaughter. Its flavor was as clear as a perfect harvest day.

What stunned me most wasn't that an 11-year-old had shot the deer; it was how unfazed I was by all of this, how words like "hunting" and "venison" had snuck into my everyday vocabulary. I soon decided that if this young girl can hunt a deer with her grandpa, then surely I can make and enjoy a vegetable-less salad.

I pored over church cookbooks to learn the ins and outs of the beast that is cookie salad. A small triumph came when I realized it is not terribly different from an Eton mess, and that its signature texture can be achieved with pastry cream and fresh whipped cream, not just boxed pudding and Cool Whip. In the end, the largest triumph of all came when I told my husband to save room for dessert: *We're having cookie salad.*

Along with her husband, Nick Hagen, a fifth-generation farmer, Molly Yeh works the sugar beet fields (pictured here) at Hagen Farm in Fordville, North Dakota.



Meringue Salad

(aka Molly Yeh's Cookie Salad)

SERVES 6; COOK TIME: 2 1/2 HOURS

For this riff on cookie salad—the Midwestern dessert made with store-bought cookies, whipped topping, and canned fruit—Molly Yeh swaps in meringue shingles, rosemary-infused pastry cream, and mandarin orange segments.

- 1 cup sugar
- 2 eggs, separated, plus 1 egg white
- 2 tbsp. mandarin zest, plus 6 mandarin oranges, peeled and separated into segments
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 3/4 cups heavy cream
- 2 sprigs rosemary
- 2 tbsp. flour
- 1/4 tsp. kosher salt

1 Heat oven to 400°. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside. Place 3/4 cup sugar on a separate parchment paper-lined baking sheet and bake until beginning to color at edges, 6–7 minutes; reduce heat to 225°. Meanwhile in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a whisk, beat egg whites on medium until foamy, about 5 minutes. Increase speed to medium-high and gradually add hot sugar to egg whites until combined; add zest and vanilla and beat until meringue is cool and glossy, about 5 minutes more. Spread meringue onto prepared baking sheet into a 3/4"-thick rectangle; bake until crisp and slightly golden, about 2 1/2 hours. Cool, then break into 1 1/2" pieces.

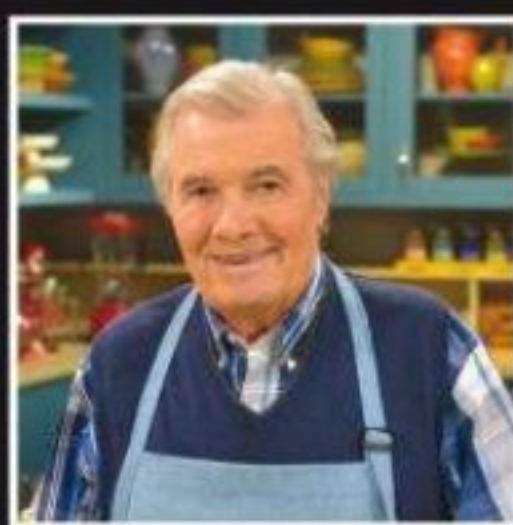
2 Cook cream and rosemary in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-low, stirring, until slightly thickened, about 30 minutes. Strain cream through a fine sieve into a bowl; reserve 1 cup cream. Cover and chill remaining cream. Combine remaining sugar, the flour, and salt in saucepan; whisk in egg yolks. While whisking, gradually stir in reserved 1 cup cream; cook over medium, stirring constantly, until thickened, 3–4 minutes. Transfer pastry cream to a bowl and press plastic wrap directly onto surface; chill for 1 hour.

3 Beat remaining cream in a bowl until stiff peaks form; fold in pastry cream, then three-quarters each meringue pieces and mandarin segments. Transfer to a serving platter and top with remaining meringue pieces and mandarin segments.

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DIY

A Beautiful Grind

An intrepid novice learns, hands-on, how the sausage gets made, and finds joy in all of its luxurious, spice-packed glory

BY CHRIS COLIN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOSEPH DE LEO



You can use almost any herbs you like in this versatile, garlicky pork sausage (see page 38 for recipe).

ORIGINAL

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On

a clear spring day, the very same week that lovage and sweet asparagus are exploding across California, Russell Moore shows up at my door with an old bucket of meat. The bucket is old, that is. The meat is fresh and lovely—impeccably sourced, marbled just so. But it's scraps: some pork shoulder and belly, a little leftover duck breast and leg and liver. Intestines, too. Sausage school is in session.

Fifteen years in the Bay Area has steeped me in the California religion of Respecting Ingredients as They Are and Not Monkeying with Them Too Much. But today Moore and I are going to grind our ingredients into disrespected little bits, then pump those bits into a garden hose of bleached sheep's and hog's intestine.

Moore is tall and boyish, always in gingham, a half-Korean Southern Californian who was a punk-rock kid and worked at Alice

As we select this piece and dismiss that one, I notice the deeper appeal—the endless experimenting with cuts, the infinite combinations of flavors

Waters' Chez Panisse in the '80s. When Moore was a young cook there, Waters got a hankering for boudin blanc—the white pork sausage claimed by both the French (they use milk) and the Cajuns (they use rice)—and asked if Moore knew how to make the thing. Of course, he said. Then quickly, calmly, he called David Tanis, the restaurant's chef at the time, and explained that he'd never even tried boudin blanc, much less

prepared it. They talked it out. What Moore produced was so good it became a staple and made it into the *Chez Panisse Café Cookbook*.

After two decades at Chez Panisse, Moore opened Camino, a rustic, cook-most-things-in-a-fireplace restaurant in Oakland. I spent a good chunk of the past year loitering there, helping to write their forthcoming cookbook. But somehow I'd never witnessed the famous sausage prep until now. (Freud says there are no accidents.)

We inhabit a funny moment, sausage-wise. Historically, when a civilization was too technologically primitive to keep meat, sausage—cured with salt or dried—was one way meat was preserved. Now, sausage making is where one turns when sous vide feels too 2013. But this country's fondness for cylindrical meat sits

atop a rigorous incuriosity about the stuff. Don't ask, don't tell what's inside that bad boy—a philosophy that makes chefs like Moore snort and adventurous home cooks reach, trembling, for the casings container.

I had always accepted sausages as a foregone conclusion, neither bad nor good, in the way a soap dish is neither bad nor good. After all, they arrive fully formed, with no trace of domestic origin; there's something palpably *store-bought* about sausage. But when hanging around Camino, I started paying attention to the sausages I ate, how crumbly they were, how subtle the flavor. And I realized that there's such a thing as truly excellent sausage, made by two hands transforming leftover bits into something much more than the sum of its parts.

As we gather at my kitchen island, selecting this piece and dismissing that one, and as I mortar our herbs and spices, I notice a deeper appeal—the endless experimenting with cuts, the infinite combinations of flavors. The essence of sausage making is more math than gore. The superlative sausage emerges from a thoughtful mix of lean and fat—less than 30 percent fat will leave you unhappy, says Moore—and from the right *qualities* of lean, and *qualities* of fat. Once you invest in a couple of ridiculous-looking pieces of equipment, there's also an economic argument for my newest culinary obsession: Odd cuts of meat and leftover herbs now have a second life.

Today's rehabilitation project: a garlicky herb pork sausage, and a slightly fattier pork and duck sausage with juniper. The marbled pork shoulder and the pale back fat are cut into cubes; silky duck liver remains in shimmering slabs. As a rule, Moore improvises his other recipes. Today, he weighs or measures out each ingredient. It's like seeing a bear up on its hind legs. But mediocre sausage is plentiful on our planet, and a quality sausage demands precision.

I begin the horror-movie task of feeding the meat into the grinder attachment on my KitchenAid. It is oddly meditative—as much as pulverizing duck and pig can constitute meditation—to watch the meat Play-Doh its way through the grinder plate.

I've invested in a five-gallon, vaguely *Game of Thrones*-ish sausage stuffer and now it's time to use it. I didn't think I knew what casings smelled like, but I get a whiff of them in Moore's bucket and realize some ancient part of me has always known what casings smell like. As I unroll the casings over the nozzle, I remember the town in Bavaria where locals erected a monument to Johann Georg Lahner, inventor of the frankfurter. A monument! I hope merely for a small plaque as I snip a link free and throw it into a pan.

"Aren't we supposed to *cure* this somehow?" I

the BASIC TECHNIQUE



①

Moisten the nozzle of the stuffer with water. Slide one end of the casing flush to the hilt of the nozzle, and then slide on the remainder.



②

Turn on the stuffer and press meat into machine until about $\frac{1}{2}$ " of meat protrudes from the tip. Turn it off and pull 4-5" of casing from the nozzle over the protruding meat. Turn the machine back on and allow 1-2" more stuffing to fill the casing; press out air pockets and tie a knot at the tip of the sausage.



③

Continue running the machine, gently pressing the meat into the casing and coiling the sausage on your work surface, until you have used up all of the meat.



④

Cut off excess casing, pressing out air pockets, and tie the end in a knot. Either twist your sausage into links or leave it as a single coil.

ILLUSTRATIONS: JOE MCKENDRY

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ask Moore. "Like they did before sending it off on ships?" He smiles. We're not getting on any ships; we'll eat these soon.

Very soon, in fact. Two hours after we begin, we take our first bites. A splash of brandy would be nice, Moore says. I nod sagely. In truth all I can think is, *I can't believe we made sausage*. Ours is light and subtle, moist but not heavy or greasy. The herbs and spices I'd so patiently ground are bright and central.

I don't measure our success in the individual bites, but in the countless that follow. I keep eating and eating. The next morning I eat sausage with sauerkraut. For lunch I eat it with asparagus, fresh lovage, thyme, and oregano. For dinner I eat more of my lunch. A normal person consuming this much sausage fills himself with regret. But I feel light and springy, perfectly balanced, just like my creations.

Moore prefers to grill sausages, but you can also pan-fry them. For either method, cook until charred, turning as needed, 12–15 minutes over medium-high heat.

GARLIC AND HERB SAUSAGE

SERVES 6; PHOTO ON PAGE 34

PREP TIME: 3½ HOURS

"Lovage has a mysterious quality," says chef Russell Moore of the underused herb, which "tastes like celery mixed with Middle Eastern spices." It's an unusual, delectable addition to this classic sausage mix.

- 4 tsp. whole black peppercorns
- 1 tsp. whole allspice berries
- 2 bay leaves, torn into pieces
- 2 espelette peppers, stemmed and torn into pieces
- 2¼ lb. pork shoulder, cut into 1" pieces
- 1¾ lb. pork belly, cut into 1" pieces
- ½ cup white wine
- 2 tbsp. kosher salt
- 2 stalks green garlic or 6 cloves garlic, peeled and mashed into a paste
- 2 tbsp. roughly chopped oregano
- 1 tbsp. roughly chopped lovage
- Sheep's casings, for stuffing

Pulse peppercorns, allspice, bay leaves, and peppers in a spice grinder until fine. Combine spices, the pork, wine, salt, and garlic in a bowl; toss to combine and then cover. Chill until very cold, 3 hours. Pass meat mixture through a grinder set to large dice; stir in oregano and lovage. Stuff sausage mixture into casings (see "The Basic Technique," page 36).

PORK AND DUCK SAUSAGE

SERVES 6

PREP TIME: 3½ HOURS

Most sausage recipes call for a meat mixture that is about 30 percent fat—using too much can yield a link that is more greasy than luxurious. Here, Moore combines pork belly with rich duck liver and skinless duck breast—fatty duck skin is too tough—for a perfectly tender sausage.

- 1 tbsp. whole black peppercorns
- 1 tsp. caraway seeds
- 1 tsp. whole allspice berries
- ½ tsp. juniper berries
- 4 cloves
- 2 bay leaves, torn into pieces
- 2 lb. pork belly, cut into 1" pieces
- 1¾ lb. pork shoulder, cut into 1" pieces
- 6 oz. duck liver, cut into ½" pieces
- ½ cup white wine
- 2 tbsp. plus 2 tsp. fine sea salt
- 1 duck leg, about 9 oz., bone removed, cut into 1" pieces
- 8¾ oz. skinless duck breast, cut into ⅓" pieces
- Hog casings, for stuffing

Pulse peppercorns, caraway seeds, allspice, juniper berries, cloves, and bay leaves in a

spice grinder until coarse. Combine spices, the pork belly, ⅓ of the pork shoulder, the duck liver, wine, salt, and duck leg in a bowl; transfer remaining pork shoulder and the duck breast to separate bowls. Cover bowls and chill until very cold, 3 hours. Pass meat mixture through a grinder set to large dice; pass remaining pork shoulder through a grinder set to fine dice. Mix ground meat mixtures and the duck breast. Stuff sausage mixture into casings (see "The Basic Technique," page 36).

BOUDIN BLANC

SERVES 6

PREP TIME: 3½ HOURS

In 1805, Meriwether Lewis ate buffalo boudin blanc cooked by Toussaint Charbonneau, Sacagawea's husband, deeming it "one of the greatest delicacies of the forest." Moore substitutes pork and chicken for buffalo in his modern version, whipping the mixture to yield a smooth, light stuffing.

- 3½ tbsp. whole black peppercorns
- 1 tsp. caraway seeds
- ½ tsp. cayenne pepper
- ½ tsp. freshly grated nutmeg
- 20 whole allspice berries
- 16 bay leaves, torn into pieces
- 4 cloves
- 1¼ lb. boneless pork shoulder, cut into 1" pieces
- 1 lb. boneless, skin-on chicken breasts, cut into 1" pieces
- ½ lb. pork fatback, cut into 1" pieces
- 4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 1½ cups heavy cream
- ½ cup fresh bread crumbs
- 1 tbsp. thyme leaves, minced
- Hog casings, for stuffing

1 Pulse peppercorns, caraway, cayenne, nutmeg, allspice, bay leaves, and cloves in a spice grinder until fine. Combine spices, the pork shoulder, chicken, fatback, and salt; cover and chill until very cold, 3 hours.

2 Melt butter in a 12" skillet over medium-high. Cook onion until soft, 8–10 minutes; let cool. Combine onion and meat mixture; pass through a grinder set to fine dice. Meanwhile, combine cream and bread crumbs in a bowl; let sit 10 minutes. Transfer ground meat mixture, bread crumb mixture, and the thyme to the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment; beat on medium until fluffy and mousseline, about 5 minutes. Stuff sausage mixture into casings (see "The Basic Technique," page 36).

For more sausage making tips and tricks, turn to "DIY Sausage," page 84.

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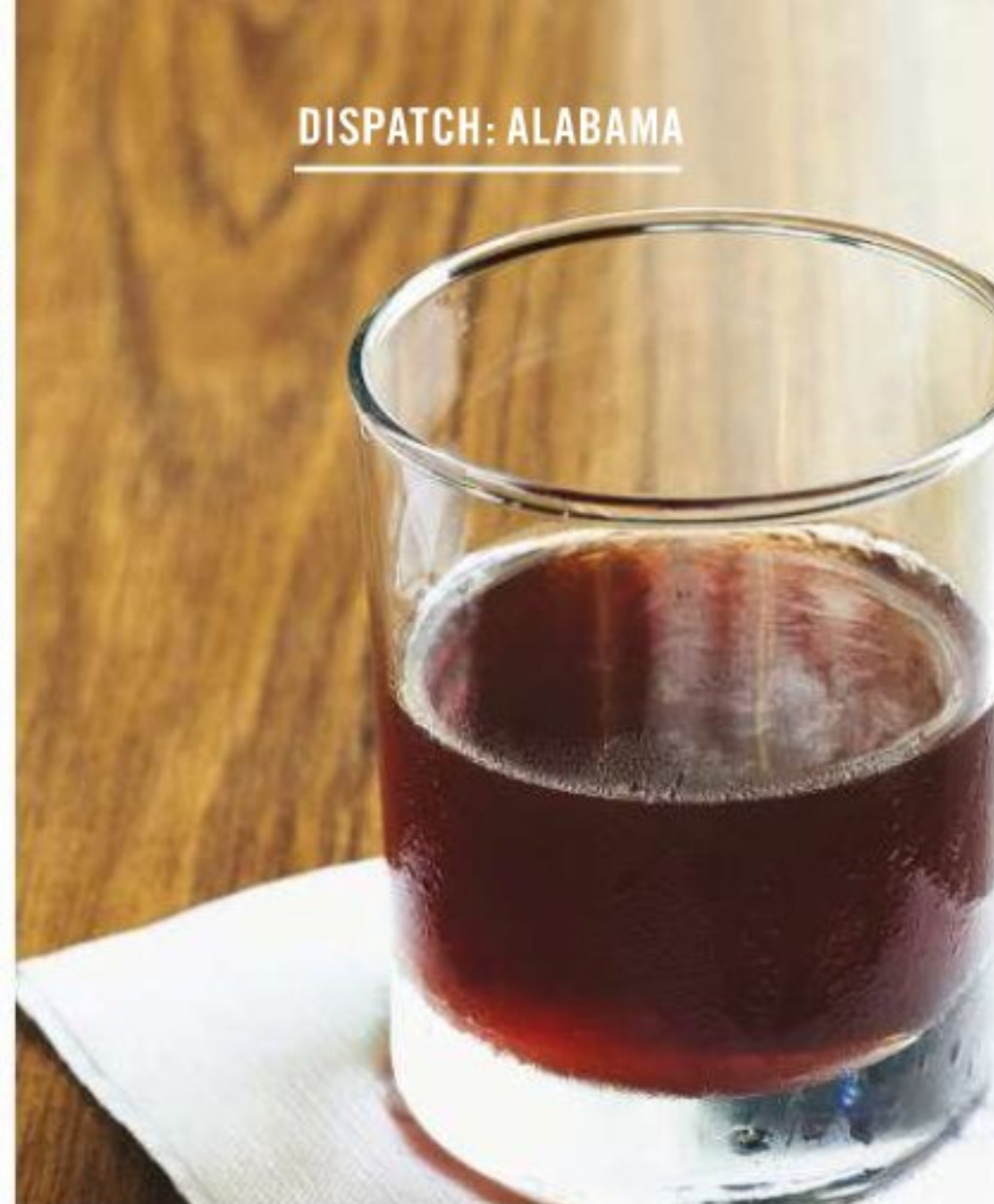
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DISPATCH: ALABAMA

Church Night

ON SUNDAYS IN BIRMINGHAM, A CRAFT COCKTAIL POP-UP IS A SAVIOR FROM THE CITY'S BLUE LAWS

By Kara Newman

Go to Lou's in Lakeview. Ask for Angel. If he's not there, leave."

I was lucky to get the clandestine, word-of-mouth invitation. Visiting Birmingham, Alabama, and desperately seeking a cocktail as the sun slid away on a Sunday afternoon, I didn't have many options. Nearly two-thirds of Alabama's counties are dry, but even in wet Birmingham, many places abstain from serving on Sundays; liquor stores stay closed, too.

From the street, Lou's doesn't look like much. Green neon script in the window spells out "Lou's Pub & Package Store," and for the most part it delivers on that humble promise as a hybrid beer-and-shot dive bar and liquor shop (the retail side stays closed on Sundays). Locals drop in for a Bud at the low-ceilinged, dark-wood bar or sit on the patio, a few stone benches and tables arranged on the concrete out front. Some buy a bottle of Jack to take home at the end of the night. Most days of the week, it's a watering hole like any other, a little shabby, sure, but not without straightforward, reliable comforts—an empty stool, a cold beer.

On Sundays and Wednesdays, however, things are a little different: It's Church Night at Lou's. On those nights, bartender Angel Negrin sets up a craft cocktail pop-up, something like a swank supper club plunked into a greasy spoon. The dive-bar bones are still there, of course, but Negrin adds a bit of flash as he unpacks diamond-cut mixing glasses and shiny jiggers. The genial Bud-drinkers in T-shirts remain, too, but they sit elbow to elbow with a younger crowd dressed in vintage finds and sipping Corpse Revivers, Old Pals, and other classic cocktails.

"Is Angel here?" I ask the barrel-chested man in a flannel shirt who's standing at the clunky cash register over a display of gum and candy in a dusty glass case. Without a word, he jerks a thumb down the narrow bar. Negrin is easy to identify as mixologist material: tall and with a clean-shaven head, gracefully stirring two drinks at a time with long-handled bar spoons. Yes, this is the

guy you want making your drink. I ease into one of the round tables arranged artlessly in the retail space between the long walls of bottles and scan the menu. There are a handful of original cocktails, including the Mid-Bar Purse Dump, a tall, fruity vodka sipper. But mostly Negrin sticks to classics: I order the Diamondback (rye whiskey, applejack, and yellow Chartreuse; see recipe below)—a vintage drink, but a new one to me. It's balanced and bracing, and it disappears awfully fast.

"It didn't start as a Church Night," Negrin says. "It just happened that way." Before Lou's, Negrin, a Pennsylvania native, mixed drinks at Birmingham's fine-dining restaurants, including Frank Stitt's French bistro, Chez Fonfon, and Italian-inspired Bettola. Around then, he noticed that Birmingham had little in the way of stand-alone cocktail bars. When the owner of Lou's mused aloud one night about offering craft cocktails, Negrin volunteered to jump in on the slow nights, Wednesday and Sunday. Coincidentally, those are the same two days that many of the Bible Belt faithful attend church. "You go to church twice a week if you don't want to be talked about bad by your congregation," Negrin says. But it wasn't any rebellion against moralists that got Church Night going—it was the dearth of great drinks. "The cocktail scene in Birmingham is so young," says Negrin. "It wasn't that long ago that you couldn't get a good cocktail here."

At Church Night, the low steel-and-vinyl barstools are full—one ponytailed gent in spectacles and a vest chats up a woman sporting plenty of ink and a crocheted dress. By the window, a table of denim-clad locals makes birthday toasts with bottles of beer and tequila shots. In a whiskey-fueled reverie, I squint and—just for a moment—the bottle-green neon glow in Lou's window almost looks like stained glass. A burst of laughter erupts from the group by the window, bringing me back, and it's time to order another round.

Diamondback MAKES 1 COCKTAIL

This high-octane classic (pictured above, center), which appears in Ted Saucier's 1951 *Bottoms Up*, was named after the Diamondback Lounge in Maryland's Lord Baltimore Hotel.

To make it, combine 1½ oz. American rye whiskey, ¾ oz. Laird's Applejack, and ¾ oz. yellow Chartreuse in an ice-filled pint glass. Quickly stir and strain into a chilled old-fashioned glass.

The scene at Church Night at Lou's Pub (726 29th St. S.) in Birmingham is a mishmash of dive and cocktail cultures. From left: Bar regulars tend to red plastic cups; fancier Church Night cocktails, like the Diamondback, are served in proper glassware; bartender Angel Negrin.

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Mussels Pecorino

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à la Blanche de Chambly

PREPARATION : 30 MIN | COOKING TIME : 30 MIN | SERVINGS : 2

INGREDIENTS

Olive oil

2 cups sliced leek

3 large finely chopped garlic cloves

1/4 cup white wine

2 tomatoes, cubed

1 orange bell pepper, cubed

Salt and freshly ground pepper

1/2 cup Blanche de Chambly, room temperature

2/3 cup grated Pecorino Romano cheese

1kg mussels washed and debearded

(if you can, blue mussels from Prince Edward Island)

2/3 cup chopped fresh parsley

PREPARATION

1- Warm a generous dash of olive oil over medium heat in a large pan. Add leeks and cook for 3 minutes, stirring often. Add garlic and cook for 1 minute.

2- Deglaze with the white wine and cook for 2-3 minutes. Mix well.

3- Add the tomatoes and the bell pepper, add salt and pepper. Cook for 3 minutes, stirring often.

4- Pour the beer and the cheese, let the cheese melt for 2 minutes. Add the mussels and increase heat slightly. Mix well, cover and cook until the mussels are completely open, about 5 minutes.

5- Mix well before serving in bowls and pour juice on top.

Serve with a fresh baguette from the market to soak up all the great beer broth!

BLANCHE DE CHAMBLY

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The New Grilling Essentials

SEVEN GRILLING
EXPERTS SHARE THEIR TIPS
ON TAMING THE FLAME

Oh happy, smoky, bring-out-the-giant-tongs, never-leave-our-backyards day: Grilling season is here again. And though we love all the familiar rituals and simple pleasures of cooking outside, we're always open to learning a few new good tricks. Like how to grill a better burger—by keeping the meat itself off the grates. Or how a bit of gentle charcoal heat (and a bunch of compound butters and homemade chile sauce) can bring a seafood tower to new heights.

"Grilling is convivial," notes Edi Frauneder of New York's Edi & the Wolf. "There's something about this act of coming together over an open flame that just says *vacation*." Frauneder throws together a casually brilliant, crowd-pleasing open-faced assemblage of pickled peaches and plums with burrata and arugula on top of homemade flatbread. It's a reminder that cooking with fire isn't just about big cuts of meat (though we've got ideas for that too) or who's got the bigger flames. Frauneder's dish is subtle, smoky, sweet, and tart. And like the rest of these inspired takes on summer grilling, it's exactly what we want to be cooking and eating right now.

Photographs by **MICHAEL TUREK**

The all-brisket patty for this burger—from San Francisco's Wes Rowe, a pop-up burger slinger—is grilled, but in a cast-iron pan over the flame. This not only minimizes flare-ups (which result in a bitter flavor), but also allows the burger to cook over a bed of onions that would otherwise burn. The onions simultaneously season the meat and soak up the juices of the brisket, and by charring the other toppings and bun over an open flame, you'll get the quintessentially smoky touch you expect from a burger.

- 2 lb. beef brisket, ground (ask your butcher to do this)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 medium red onions, sliced $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick
- 1 medium yellow onion, sliced $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick
- 6 slices cheddar cheese
- 6 burger buns, halved
- 3 hearts of romaine, halved lengthwise
- 3 whole dill pickles, sliced $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick
- 2 heirloom tomatoes, cored and sliced $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick
- Ketchup, mayonnaise, and mustard, for serving

"It's a really exciting time to enjoy American wines," says sommelier **Vilma Mazaite**, director of wine at Austin's wine-focused La V restaurant. "Winemakers are stepping out of their comfort zone, making much more balanced, less manipulated wines." We asked Mazaite, widely recognized for her command of American and international wines, to recommend pairings—mostly wine, but some beer and cocktails, too—for these new grilling essentials. For this burger, she suggests a 2012 Lioco "Indica" Carignane, (\$20; klwines.com), from Mendocino County, California, a light red that will let the brisket's flavor shine.

The all-brisket patty for this burger—from San Francisco's Wes Rowe, a pop-up burger slinger—is grilled, but in a cast-iron pan over the flame. This not only minimizes flare-ups (which result in a bitter flavor), but also allows the burger to cook over a bed of onions that would otherwise burn. The onions simultaneously season the meat and soak up the juices of the brisket, and by charring the other toppings and bun over an open flame, you'll get the quintessentially smoky touch you expect from a burger.

YOGURT-MARINATED CHICKEN SHAWARMA

This underused marinade ingredient adds tang as it tenderizes

Certain types of dairy, particularly buttermilk and yogurt, have just the right amount of acid to gently break down meat's tougher fibers when added to marinades. "But the real reason I love yogurt is that it has a mild amount of sugar," says James Beard Award-winning chef Ana Sortun, who runs the beloved Mediterranean restaurant Oleana in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "It enhances the flavor of the meat, with just a little sweetness, but won't burn on the grill." Papaya, pineapple, grapefruit, and grated onion are other underused marinade ingredients that will simultaneously tenderize and add flavor.

SERVES 4; COOK TIME: 30 MINUTES, PLUS 1 HOUR MARINATING

- 2 lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1" cubes
- 1 3/4 cups full-fat Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup plus 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tbsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste

- 1 tbsp. ground allspice
- 1 1/2 tsp. ground coriander
- 1 1/2 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 8 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 small white onion, grated
- Skewers, for grilling
- 4 pita breads
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 cup minced cucumber
- 1/2 cup frozen, thawed, chopped spinach
- 2 tbsp. minced fresh dill
- 2 tbsp. minced fresh mint
- 2 tbsp. minced fresh parsley
- 1 tsp. dried mint
- 1/2 bulb fennel, outer layers discarded, cored and finely chopped
- Sumac, for garnish

1 Combine chicken, 1/4 cup yogurt, 1/2 cup oil, 1 tbsp. pepper, the allspice, coriander, cumin,

cinnamon, 1 tsp. salt, 3/4 of the garlic, and the onion in a bowl; cover and refrigerate 1 hour or until ready to use.

2 Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium-high.) Thread chicken on skewers, discarding marinade; season with salt and pepper. Grill chicken, turning as needed, until charred and almost cooked through, about 10 minutes; remove from grill. Place pita on grill and top with skewers; grill until pita is slightly charred and chicken is cooked through, 8-10 minutes more. Transfer pita to a cutting board and let chicken skewers rest on top for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, combine remaining garlic and the lemon juice in a bowl; let sit for 10 minutes. Whisk in remaining yogurt and oil, the cucumber, spinach, fresh and dried herbs, fennel, salt, and pepper. Garnish shawarma with sumac and serve with yogurt sauce.

Soak up the flavorful juices of this dish by resting chicken skewers on grilled pita during the final stages of cooking.



The citrus notes of the 2012 Hermann J. Wiemer Dry Riesling (\$19; wiemer.com or 607-243-7971), from Finger Lakes, New York, complement the tanginess of the yogurt.



Try a 2012 Schramsberg blanc de blancs (\$38; schramsberg.com), because oysters are meant to go with bubbles. If you'd like something stiffer, a gin and tonic works well, too.

GRILLED OYSTERS ON A BED OF SALT

For even cooking and easy maneuvering, use this simple method

Instead of grilling oysters directly on the grill, Michael Anthony—chef of New York's Gramercy Tavern and the recently opened Untitled—nestles them on a tray lined with salt, which he then puts over the fire. "A salt bed distributes heat gently," he says, allowing the oysters to warm evenly and just plump up, making it nearly impossible to overcook the delicate meat. Plus, this preparation means they'll be easier to move around the grates, so you'll lose less of that precious oyster liquor. Serve with a simple grilled lemon-herb sauce to amp up the smokiness.

SERVES 6
COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES

- 2 lemons, halved, plus wedges for serving
- 2 sprigs rosemary
- 3 sprigs thyme
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 5 cups coarse salt
- 1 dozen large oysters, shucked, top shell removed

Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. Grill lemons, cut-side down, and herbs until charred, 8–10 minutes for lemons and 5–7 minutes for herbs; let cool slightly. Squeeze juice from lemons into a bowl with olive oil, salt, and pepper. Transfer herbs to a cutting board, discard stems, and mince; stir into lemon vinaigrette. Spread salt in a 9"x13" metal baking dish. Nestle oysters into bed of salt. Place dish on grill and cover with grill lid; grill until oysters are plump and beginning to curl at edges, 2–3 minutes. Transfer to a serving platter and serve drizzled with lemon vinaigrette.

Picking Oysters for Grilling

"You can grill any oyster you'd eat raw," says John Finger of California's Hog Island Oyster Co., "but bigger is better, since the longer they cook, the more they shrink." Rules of thumb: Opt for Pacific over Eastern, and look for a 4–5" shell size. Have your fishmonger shuck one before you buy; the meat should almost fill the shell.

Besides salt, you can use seaweed or sand to form a bed for any shellfish on the half shell.



A GIANT FENNEL-CHILE-RUBBED STEAK

One essential rub on an extra-large cut yields a restaurant-worthy meal for a crowd

"It's my only rub, and my favorite rub," says Andrea Reusing, James Beard Award-winning chef of Lantern restaurant in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, of her mildly hot fennel seed rub. It works on just about anything: chicken, mackerel, wild salmon, vegetables, steaks, whatever. "People who don't think they like licorice still like it, because the flavor plays off the peppers in a really nice way," she says. The subtle anise flavor will come through in the oven or on the stovetop, but cooking it over an open flame creates an irresistible crust.

SERVES 2

COOK TIME: 1 HOUR, 15 MINUTES

- 1 2-2½-lb. T-bone steak, 2½-3" thick
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 1 tbsp. olive oil
- ¼ cup fennel-chile rub (see recipe below)

1 Season steak generously with salt; let sit at room temperature for 2 hours.

2 Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium.) Brush steak with oil and coat with the fennel-chile rub; grill, turning as needed, until cooked to desired doneness, about 45 minutes for medium-rare, or until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the steak reads 125°. Let steak rest 15 minutes before carving. Sprinkle with salt and serve.

Fennel-Chile Rub

MAKES 1 CUP

Toast ¼ cup whole fennel seeds and ¼ cup whole black peppercorns in a medium skillet over medium-high until seeds begin to pop, 1-2 minutes; let cool slightly. Working in batches, transfer to a spice grinder and pulse until coarsely ground. Mix with ½ cup crushed red chile flakes in a bowl and then transfer to an airtight container. Store in the refrigerator for up to 3 months.

The Beauty of Grilling Large Cuts of Meat

"People associate steakhouses with steaks that are rare-ish inside and have a super-burnished crust on the outside," says Reusing. The easiest way to get that pro texture at home is to go big. Use a bone-in cut that's a few inches thick. You'll pay a pretty penny for big cuts, but they're more forgiving than skinny steaks, which go from raw to overcooked in a flash. A large cut can handle the heat and easily serve a crowd with varying tastes—some parts will be more well-done, others more rare. Plus, says Reusing, "You can get a really serious, crunchy dark crust on the outside, simply because you're cooking it longer."





The 2008 Mayacamas
Mt. Veeder Merlot (\$38;
sherry-lehmann.com), from Napa,
or the 2012 Arnot Roberts Syrah
(\$40; winetransit.com), from
California's North Coast, are
both slightly gamey and work
well with the rub's heat.

Seafood Butters and Sauce

Feel free to mix and match these with any seafood you like. The butters work well both melted down for dunking and as a baste for seafood on the grill.

Chile Sauce

Heat a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-high; cook 2 each dry chipotle, guajillo, and pasilla chiles, flipping once, until toasted and fragrant, 3-4 minutes. Remove the stems and add the chiles to a small food processor with 1 tsp. brown sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt, and 2 tbsp. water; purée until coarse. Stir in $\frac{3}{4}$ cup canola oil. Makes 1 cup.

Coffee Butter

Heat $\frac{1}{3}$ cup heavy cream and 3 tbsp. ground coffee in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high; cook until warmed through, 3-4 minutes. Strain, discarding solids; cool. Add to food processor with 16 tbsp. softened unsalted butter and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. kosher salt; pulse until combined. Makes 1 cup.

Seaweed Butter

Stir $\frac{1}{4}$ cup white miso, 16 tbsp. softened unsalted butter, 2 tbsp. ground nori, and 1 tbsp. Chinese hot mustard in a bowl until combined. Makes 1 cup.



GRILLED SEAFOOD TOWER

Typically served raw and chilled, this dish tastes even better fresh off the grates

"Chilled seafood towers are boring," says chef David Ochs of Chicago's soon-to-open Maple & Ash. "I wanted to serve an exceptional marinated grilled seafood tower instead, with that smoky smell that turns heads." After briefly cooking the lobsters, langoustines, and scallops flesh-side down, Ochs finishes them on the shell, which allows the meat to poach gently in its own juices. "Because the shell is taking the brunt of the heat from the grill," says Ochs, "it will char, and that's a good thing. You'll really smell it and get a wonderful smoky flavor."

Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium-high.)

King Crab Legs

Grill legs, turning as needed, until shells are charred and crabmeat is heated through, about 8 minutes. Serve with seaweed butter (see [page 50](#) for recipe).

Lobsters and Langoustines

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil; cook live lobsters for 5 minutes. Split each lobster in half lengthwise through head and tail. Scoop out and discard the tomalley. Split langoustines in half lengthwise. Season lobsters and langoustines with salt and pepper and grill flesh-side down until slightly charred, 2-3 minutes for lobster and 1 minute for langoustines. Turn each over and, using a spoon, spread with seaweed butter (see [page 50](#) for recipe); continue grilling until meat is tender, 3-5 minutes more for lobsters and 1-2 minutes more for langoustines.

Clams and Mussels

Grill, turning once, until shells open, about 10-12 minutes for clams and 3-5 minutes for mussels. Transfer to a bowl and toss with chile sauce (see [page 50](#) for recipe).

Scallops

Grill on the half shell, flesh-side down, until browned and partly cooked through, about 3 minutes. Turn over and add 1 tbsp. coffee butter (see [page 50](#) for recipe); grill until cooked through, basting with butter, about 2 minutes more.

Two pounds of crab legs, 3 lobsters, 6 langoustines, and a dozen each of clams and mussels will serve 10 as an appetizer.



The creamy texture of the 2012 Sandhi Sanford & Benedict Chardonnay (\$49; [empirewine.com](#)), from the Santa Rita Hills of California, plays off the richness of this buttery seafood perfectly.

For a three-tiered seafood tower like this one, try Benzara's galvanized metal server (\$68; [amazon.com](#)).

Transform
your grill into a
smoker in four
simple steps



1

Soak 1 pound hickory wood chips in water for 30 minutes; drain.



2

Spread wood chips evenly over 5 pounds of hot coals, taking care not to completely smother coals.



3

Close grill lid, leaving vents slightly open to allow wood chips to smoke, about 3–4 minutes.



4

Place parcooked meat on grill and close lid. Smoke until meat is fragrant and several shades darker, 35–45 minutes.

CHAR-SMOKED BABY BACK RIBS

A two-part cooking technique—first grilling, then smoking—leads to tender meat with layers of flavor

“Using a chargrill and smoke combo, you can create this really soulful, comforting flavor pretty easily,” says chef Sean Brock of Husk and McCrady’s in Charleston, South Carolina. After getting a nice crust on these ribs, Brock converts his grill into a smoker and finishes the meat low-and-slow in a cocoon of smoke, which gently breaks down the meat.

SERVES 6; COOK TIME: 2 HOURS,
PLUS BRINING OVERNIGHT

- 1/4 cup kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 1 tbsp. sorghum syrup
- 2 3-lb. racks pork baby back ribs
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 tbsp. peanut oil
- 10 scallions, trimmed
- 1 cup store-bought or homemade barbecue sauce (see page 85 for recipe)
- 1 cup roughly chopped cilantro
- 1 tbsp. Bourbon Barrel Bluegrass Soy Sauce (earthy.com)

1 Heat 1/4 cup salt and 8 cups water in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high; stir until salt has dissolved, 2–3 minutes. Remove from heat and add syrup. Let brine cool completely and then pour into a 9”x13” baking dish. Place ribs in brine, cover, and refrigerate overnight.

2 Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill. Drain ribs and pat dry with paper towels; season with salt and pepper. Grill ribs, turning as needed, until charred on both sides and tender, about 1 hour; set ribs aside.

3 Toss peanut oil, scallions, and salt in a bowl; grill scallions, turning once, until heavily charred on both sides, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a blender with barbecue sauce, cilantro, and soy sauce; purée until smooth and set sauce aside.

4 Prepare grill and smoke ribs according to directions in sidebar (left). Transfer ribs to a cutting board and let rest 10 minutes; slather with reserved barbecue sauce. Cut ribs into individual pieces and transfer to a serving platter.



“You can do this with something as humble as a head of cauliflower,” says Brock of his grill-smoke method. “The results are so satisfying.” He likes to use it on everything from Brussels sprouts to chicken wings.



The 2013 Palmina Dolcetto (\$20; palminawines.com), from Santa Ynez Valley, California, is a light, natural pairing for rich meats. Serve slightly chilled. Or, if you prefer a beer, a Rogue stout or Jolly Pumpkin La Roja sour ale are good bets.

The Tasteful Way to Handle Flare-Ups

"You should really be terrified of flare-ups," says Brock. "Everybody thinks they look cool, but if fat drips down and flames up into the food, the food will taste terrible." His solution: Keep a squirt bottle by the grill filled with liquid that will flavor the food as it douses the flame. Depending on what you're cooking, Worcestershire sauce, fruit juice, barbecue sauce, or vinegar, diluted with water, is a good option.

PICKLED STONE FRUIT AND BURRATA FLATBREAD

Everything—pickles, dough, everything—tastes better grilled

"In Austria, we don't use tomato sauce on flatbreads," says Edi Frauneder, of Edi & the Wolf in New York City, "which allows you to taste the actual flavors of the toppings. It's cleaner." Frauneder brines peaches in a slightly sweet solution before cooking them on the open flame; the sugar in the pickle brine helps the surface of the fruit caramelize more quickly and uniformly than it would if grilled fresh. To ensure that the flatbread dough doesn't stick or burn, you can start them on aluminum foil before moving the breads to the grate for a nice smoky finish.

SERVES 6
COOK TIME: 2 HOURS

For the pickled fruit:

- 2 cups cider vinegar
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 tsp. coriander seeds
- 1 tsp. mustard seeds
- 1 tsp. whole black peppercorns
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 sprigs thyme
- 1 sprig dill
- 2 peaches, pitted and cut into 3/4" wedges
- 2 plums, pitted and cut into 3/4" wedges

For the flatbread:

- 1 1/3 cups water, heated to 115°
- 4 tsp. active dry yeast
- 3 cups flour, plus more for dusting
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 egg
- Olive oil, for greasing

For grilling and serving:

- 1 cup canola oil
- 12 cloves garlic, peeled
- Olive oil, for brushing
- 6 tbsp. crème fraîche
- 3 tbsp. shaved aged Gruyère
- 2 lb. mini burrata, cut into 1/4" pieces
- Baby arugula, for serving
- Flake sea salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Aged balsamic, for serving

1 Make the pickled fruit:

Bring vinegar, sugar, spices, garlic, thyme, dill, and 1 cup water to a boil in a 4-qt. saucepan. Remove from heat and add fruit; let cool completely, then strain, discarding liquid. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.

2 Make the flatbread dough:

Combine water and yeast in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment; let sit until foamy, 10 minutes. Add flour, salt, and egg and mix until combined; turn out onto a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth, about 5 minutes. Transfer to a greased bowl and cover loosely with plastic wrap; set in a warm place until doubled in size, about 1 hour.

3 Simmer canola oil and garlic in a 1-qt. saucepan over medium-low; cook until garlic is tender, 30-40 minutes, and let cool. Strain garlic, saving oil for another use. Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium-high.) Divide dough into six 4-oz. balls and place on a lightly floured baking sheet; cover loosely with plastic wrap and let rest 20 minutes. Working with one ball of dough at a time and on a lightly floured work surface, roll dough into a 4" round about 1/4" thick. Brush with olive oil and grill, turning once, until golden brown and almost cooked through, about 5 minutes. Top each flatbread with 1 tbsp. crème fraîche, 1/2 tbsp. Gruyère, 2 pieces confit garlic, and 4-5 slices fruit; continue grilling until bread is crisp and brown at edges, 2-3 minutes longer. Transfer to a serving platter and top with burrata, arugula, sea salt, and pepper; drizzle with balsamic.

The stone fruit characteristics of the 2012 Qupe Marsanne (\$22; sussexwine.com), from the Santa Ynez Valley, or the 2013 L'École No. 41 Old Vines Chenin Blanc (\$15; empirewine.com), from the Columbia Valley, reinforce the charred fruits' flavor.

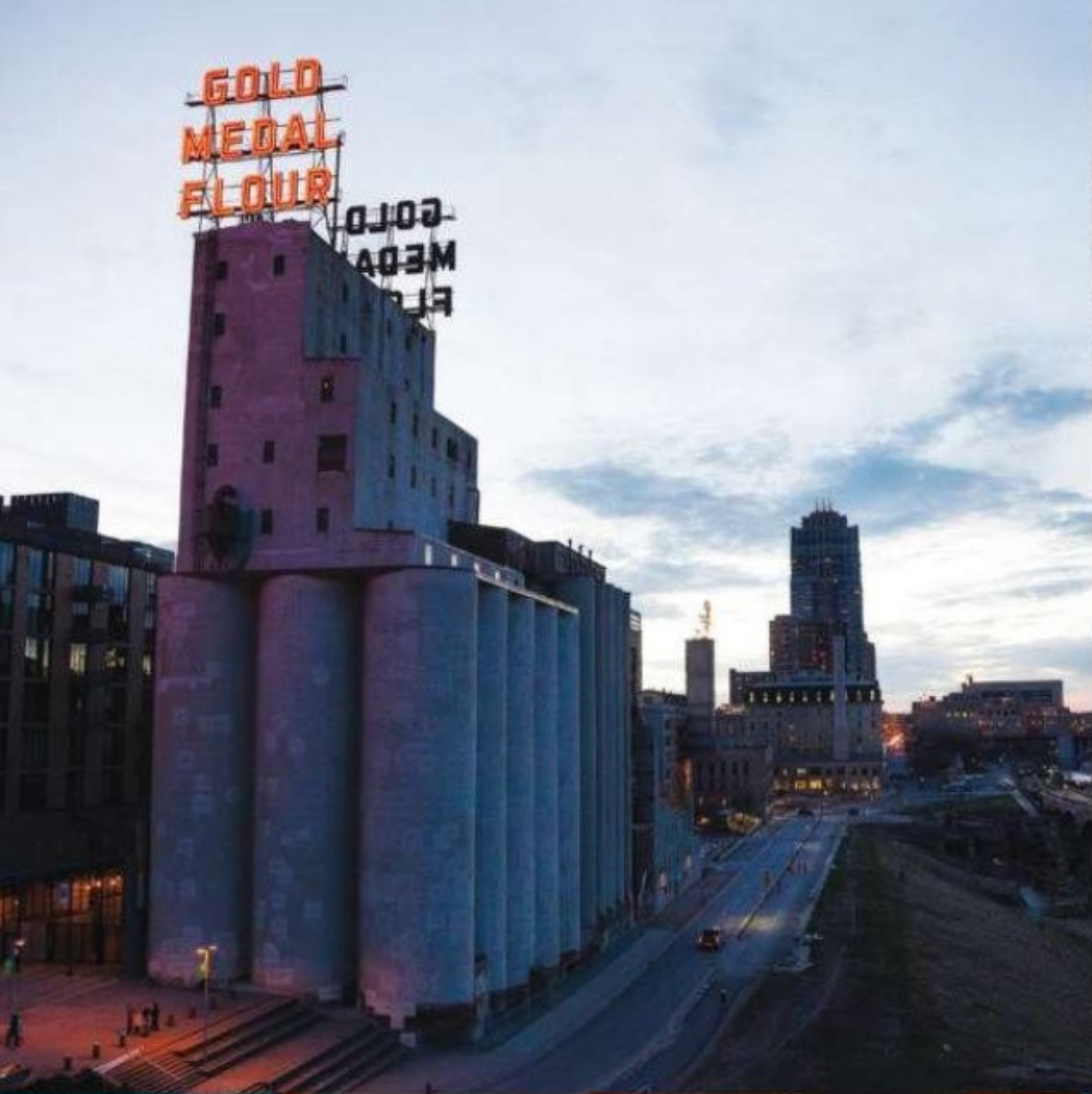




Grilled Sangria

Whether it's juicing grilled limes into margaritas, charring tomatoes for bloody marys, or making this reimagined sangria with caramelized fruits, grilling your drinks will add smoky depth to every sip

When the grates are hot but still clean, before you start grilling your meal, throw on the fruit for this drink. Or, if beginning from scratch: Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium-high.) Working in batches, grill peeled and sliced kiwi, mango, orange, star fruit, and $\frac{1}{2}$ of a pineapple, turning once, until charred on both sides, 4 minutes for kiwi, 6–8 minutes for mango and orange, and 8–10 minutes for star fruit and pineapple. Transfer to a pitcher with 1 stick of cinnamon and $\frac{1}{2}$ of a split vanilla bean. Bring $\frac{1}{2}$ cup soda water and 2 tbsp. honey to a simmer in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high. Cook until honey has dissolved, 2–3 minutes; transfer to pitcher with fruit. Add 1 cup Italian lemon soda, such as San Pellegrino, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup apricot brandy, and one 750-ml. bottle of white wine. Refrigerate 2 hours; serve with mint sprigs.





In Minneapolis, restaurants like Tilia (bottom right) and Jim Christiansen's Heyday (bottom left) are embracing the Midwest's long-beloved cuisine and using North Country ingredients like those in Christiansen's chanterelles and blackberries with green garlic, hazelnuts, fava beans, and a fried egg (top right, see [page 61](#) for recipe).

North Country Fare

Discovering the homegrown talent and culinary pleasures of America's next great food city: Minneapolis

BY MATT LEE AND TED LEE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY ARIANA LINDQUIST



Sun streams through the clerestory skylight of Spoon and Stable, a former barn in Minneapolis' North Loop warehouse district, casting the restaurant's chef, Gavin Kaysen, in a beatific glow wholly suited to the moment: Kaysen's preaching the gospel of North Country ingredients. The white marble pass of his open kitchen is an altar upon which sits a whole raw duck from a farm in Brainerd; a large jar of molasses-dark buckwheat honey is from Little Falls; and a saucepan of coal-black rice comes from just across the state line in Wisconsin. Kaysen reaches for the duck, cradling it in his upturned palm, lifts the cavity to his nose, and inhales.



Gavin Kaysen, a James Beard Award-winning chef in New York, has returned to Minneapolis to open Spoon and Stable, where he works with local purveyors to create a modern Minnesota cuisine.

“Smell that...” he insists, proffering the duck, which, true enough, has a distinct aroma, the minerals-and-popcorn whiff of dry-aged beef. “All that funk? In the bone? I want it to be absorbed by the breast meat,” he says. “That’s what we are after.”

By “we” Kaysen means he and Pat Ebnet from Wild Acres Farm, two and a half hours away. They began working together last summer to achieve the tenderness and deep flavor the chef was seeking in Pekin birds. Kaysen had recently returned to the Twin Cities (where he grew up) to open his first restaurant. In the 12 years he’d been gone he cooked in Napa, in London, and in New York City at Café Boulud on the Upper East Side.

To hear Kaysen tell it, the story of his funky duck—and his own homecoming—is as much about the thrill of finding crazily passionate people as it is about discovering alluring ingredients. Over the months that led up to Spoon and Stable’s opening in November, Ebnet sat with him for numerous taste tests of Wild Acres’ birds as the two learned that the chef-vendor relationship could be more of a collaboration than a product-drop at the kitchen door. Kaysen points to a monumental chandelier above the host’s station; it began as a conversation with a glass-artist friend who works across the river. His chef’s table—a bar for six diners overlooking the kitchen—is a thick slice of wood from a black walnut tree made by a pal who culled it from a city park.

We first learned of the culinary genius of Minnesota eight years ago from Andrew Zimmern. At the time, Zimmern was a mostly local phenomenon—an irrepressibly enthusiastic chef-turned-food-journalist—and as much as we Southerners schooled him in the ways of grits and greens, he taught us about the food scene of his adopted hometown: the Eastern European cured-meat traditions of old-school butchers like Kramarczuk’s, the amazing markets where the city’s large Hmong and Ethiopian communities shop, and the legions of food-engaged home cooks who support a dozen food cooperatives—fiercely independent supermarkets with a focus on organic and local produce.

Fast-forward to a recent return visit and we were floored by how Minneapolis was inspiring excitement about Midwestern food the way Nashville was Southern food. Food trucks were partnering with tap houses to create pop-ups. There was Haute Dish, Landon Schoenefeld’s spot serving cheeky, decadent reinventions of midcentury Midwestern cooking—including, as the name implies, haute hot dishes—and the heavily tattooed dudes of Travail Kitchen & Amusements selling tickets to hours-long tasting menus. Red Table Meat Co. was on the scene, meat pros who were curing whole cuts Italian-style and teaming up with Kramarczuk’s to offer some out-of-this-old-world sausages. And presiding over it all, like a benevolent food pope, was Zimmern, who in the intervening years had become a culi-



Bay and Rosemary Custard

SERVES 8; COOK TIME: ABOUT 1 HOUR

Chef Steven Brown of Tilia serves these custards in eggshells, but espresso cups work just as well. The yogurt helps to balance the sweetness of the rosemary-infused custard.

- 1³/₄ cups heavy cream
- ¹/₃ cup sugar
- 4 sprigs rosemary
- 3 fresh bay leaves, lightly smashed
- 2 eggs, plus 4 egg yolks
- ¹/₄ cup plain full-fat yogurt
- 1 tsp. lemon zest
- ¹/₈ tsp. kosher salt

1 Heat oven to 300°. Combine 1¹/₄ cups cream, sugar, rosemary, and bay leaves in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high until bubbles form around the edges. Remove from heat and let steep for 15 minutes; strain, discarding herbs. Return cream to pan over medium. Whisk eggs and yolks in a medium bowl until combined; gradually whisk about ¹/₄ cup of the hot cream into eggs, then stir egg mixture back into pan with hot cream. Remove from heat and strain through a fine-mesh sieve. Divide custard between eight 3-oz. espresso cups and place in a baking dish; pour boiling water into dish to come halfway up the sides of cups. Bake until custards are set but still slightly loose in center, about 30 minutes. Transfer espresso cups to a wire rack; cool. Chill until firm, at least 4 hours.

2 Whip remaining cream in a bowl until stiff peaks form; fold in yogurt, lemon zest, and salt. Serve custards with a dollop of yogurt cream on each.

nary-travel TV superstar and booster-in-chief of the Twin Cities. When the news spread that not only Kaysen, but Erik Anderson, the acclaimed chef of Nashville's Catbird Seat, was moving back to Minneapolis to be a part of the landscape, we decided to book another trip.

Minneapolis stretches across the banks of a few choice S-curves in the upper Mississippi River, and its proximity to water routes and to the fields of the fertile Grain Belt to the west made it a milling and lumbering center in the 1800s. Like many cities its size, Minneapolis developed a dense downtown grid of gleaming skyscrapers over the course of the 20th century. Here they're interconnected by the "Skyway"—a network of glassed-in second-story corridors that permit a sun-deprived resident to walk from one building to another in the middle of winter without freezing.

Often compared to Chicago and Seattle—with St. Paul it's the largest metropolis in the northern United States between the two—Minneapolis feels greener and more pastoral than both. The dense grid of streets quickly gives way to meandering tree-lined parkways that snake around public green spaces and several major lakes, a few minor ones, and the Mississippi. These parks and bodies of water have a loosening effect on the city and are central to the lives of its chefs, like Paul Berglund of The Bachelor Farmer, who proposes a brisk morning walk on one of the city's hiking trails when we first speak to him, and Steven Brown, whose restaurant, Tilia, is in an enclave of grand Craftsman-style homes just a few blocks to the west side of Lake Harriet.

A tall 50-something with a mop of gray hair, Brown looks like a Replacements roadie who missed the reunion tour bus. "Check this out," he calls from the pocket kitchen that overlooks his warm dining room with its creaky hardwood floors, glowing schoolhouse lanterns, and chipped Thonet chairs.

He tosses us each a dark-brown sandwich bun, soft and warm to the touch. "I called my buddy John at Patisserie 46 yesterday and said, 'Man, you've gotta hook me up with a pumpernickel roll!' I just picked them up from his place. Are they beautiful or what?"

He is preparing a mash-up of the Reuben sandwich and a traditional "shore lunch," a combination that Tilia is famous for. "The shore lunch is for when you're catching fish," he says. "You just fry it up in a pan on the shore, and eat it simply prepared."

Brown interprets the notion of simplicity rather loosely: he's already brined lake trout fillets in a zingy, aromatic brew made from toasted allspice, mustard seeds, cloves, star anise, and fennel. He's whipped up a mayo spiked with ancho chile and diced pickles that he calls "10,000 Lakes Sauce"—a Minnesota riff on Thousand Island. He's quick-pickled kohlrabi overnight in vinegar seasoned with fresh ginger, garlic, and lemongrass for the kohlrabi-radish slaw he's substituting for the sauerkraut.

To put the sandwich together, Brown gets to frying: "I

The city is inspiring excitement about Midwestern food the way Nashville is Southern food

got a FryDaddy for my confirmation—my friends used to call me “The Calamari Cowboy,” he says, dunking the first brined fish fillet into lemon juice–spiked buttermilk, dredging it in a dry mixture of cornmeal, flour, and whole caraway seeds, and sliding it into a pan of hot oil and butter. He babies the fillets in the fry pan, spooning the buttery oil over them until they are uniformly golden brown.

He piles a tuft of the kohlrabi slaw on the bottom half of a nicely marbleized pumpernickel bun, then reaches for the crispy fish and an aged alpine-style cheese from Roth in Wisconsin, then tops the mile-high “Reuben” with a glug of his 10,000 Lakes Sauce. It’s a punk-rock sandwich with a

\$25 dry-cleaning bill—impossible to eat without making a willful mess of it, every luscious bite worth the collateral damage.

Though it wasn’t planned, we couldn’t have dreamed up a more appropriate side dish for Brown’s “shore lunch” than the pork belly and potato recipe Paul Berglund cooked for us at The Bachelor Farmer—drawing as it did from a similar campfire culinary tradition. As a Boy Scout, Berglund remembers folding cut-up zucchini, carrots, and potatoes in packets of aluminum foil and cooking these “hobo packs” in the campfire. His 2015 reimagining of this humble childhood staple has become a signature at The Bachelor Farmer, a new-Nordic nest with acres of post-and-beam wood porn where you’re served soup in bowls thrown by the chef himself (while supplies last—the dishwasher is murder on the hand-made stuff).

“I feel more inclined to bolder flavors living in Minnesota,” says the Chicago-born chef, who served in the U.S. Navy in Japan and worked for seven years at Oliveto in Oakland before moving here in 2010. “When

you’re faced with a bitter cold span of three months, it’s fun to create ways to wake you up! There’s a need for bolder, novel flavors that energize and surprise.”

Berglund’s foil-wrapped spuds and pork belly evoke the Minnesota pine forests: When the packets heat up on the flattop griddle, the cedar paper he stuffs inside them smolders, infusing the food with smoke. He places tiles of fresh pork belly, which have been salted for a day and lightly cooked, on the potatoes and strews shallots—both pickled and caramelized—over the top.

The last stop on our “Minnesota on a Plate” tour of the city was to Christiansen’s Heyday, named—according to the definition painted across the brick wall in the barroom—after 1) an archaic term for high spirits; 2) the period of one’s greatest vigor or popularity; 3) a Replacements song. (Hint: It’s the one that goes: “Goin’ to the party though we weren’t invited!”)

The lofty, open storefront, clad in darkly stained reclaimed wood, was closed for a private event that evening, and Christiansen was solo in the spacious kitchen cooking up a warm appetizer of sautéed chanterelles and quick-pickled blackberries with green garlic, hazelnuts, fava beans, and a fried egg.

Minneapolis born and bred, one of five children, Christiansen characterized his mom’s cooking growing up as “pretty good farm-style cooking,” which sounds like an understatement when he also notes that when she baked bread, she’d toast the whole grain before grinding the wheat. His paternal grandfather was similarly an influence on his food life growing up. He lived in a working-class part of St. Paul on a large plot of land where he had a huge asparagus field, pear trees, and great tomatoes.

Christiansen caramelizes the chanterelles and spring leeks with a knob of butter, a few whole sprigs of thyme, and an unpeeled garlic clove. He squirts a flash of water from a squeeze bottle into the pan as the fried egg is nearing completion. “So it doesn’t brown around the edges,” he says. “That’s exactly the color I’m going for.”

He tops the dish with toasted hazelnuts: “They’re so fruity and roasty, they go great with eggs, and they grow everywhere here,” he says. When we bite into his Minnesota hazelnuts, it’s fair to say that we’d never really appreciated the savory side of a filbert until then. It seems odd, but there you have it: We were astonished by a hazelnut.

Then Christiansen makes a confession: “The Minneapolis Park System is a foraging secret,” he says about one of his favorite suppliers. Tart and earthy claytonia leaves, chanterelles, morels, and nettles are some of his favorite finds. “Actually, most of the chefs know about it, but it’s big enough for all of us. We’re spoiled here,” he says. ■

Where to eat in Minneapolis

The Bachelor Farmer

50 Second Ave. N
thebachelorfarmer.com

Haute Dish

119 Washington Ave. N
haute-dish.com

Heyday

2700 Lyndale Ave. S
heydayeats.com

Kramarczuk’s

215 E. Hennepin Ave.
kramarczuks.com

Pâtisserie 46

4552 Grand Ave. S
patisserie46.com

Red Table Meat Co.

1401 Marshall St. NE
redtablemeatco.com

Spoon and Stable

211 First St. N
spoonandstable.com

Tilia

2726 W. 43rd St.
tiliampls.com

Travail Kitchen & Amusements

4124 W. Broadway Ave.
travailkitchen.com



From left: Kaysen's wood-grilled duck breast with black rice, beets, and honey; Paul Berglund, one of several former big-city chefs who have returned to the Midwest to cook, runs The Bachelor Farmer.

Wood-Grilled Duck Breast

SERVES 4
COOK TIME: 1 ½ HOURS

The earthiness of beets pairs well with duck, which chef Gavin Kaysen likes to grill, but a skillet works just as well at home. The black rice is an incredible dish simply on its own.

- 1½ tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 8 whole baby red and yellow beets
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 cups chicken stock
- 1 cup black rice (wholefoods.com)
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 shallot, minced
- 2 duck breasts
- ¼ cup honey
- Watercress, for garnish

Heat oven to 350°. Toss 1 tbsp. oil, the vinegar, whole beets, salt, and pepper in a baking dish and cover tightly with foil; roast until tender, about 45 minutes. Cool slightly, then peel and cut into ½" wedges; keep warm. In a 4-qt. saucepan, bring stock, rice, butter, shallot, and salt to a boil. Reduce heat to medium and simmer, uncovered, until liquid has been absorbed and rice is tender,

about 30 minutes. Season flesh side of duck with salt and pepper. Place duck skin-side down in a 12" skillet; heat over medium-high. Cook, without turning, until fat is rendered and skin is crisp, 5-6 minutes. Flip duck; cook, basting with honey, to desired doneness, about 3-5 minutes for medium-rare. Transfer duck to a cutting board; let rest 10 minutes before slicing in half lengthwise. Toss watercress with remaining olive oil, salt, and pepper. To serve, divide rice between plates; top with duck, beet wedges, and watercress.

Fried Egg with Hazelnuts, Chanterelles, Green Garlic, and Blackberries

SERVES 4
PHOTO ON [PAGE 56](#)
COOK TIME: 30 MINUTES

Chef Jim Christiansen fries his eggs with a splash of water to prevent the whites from burning.

- ¼ cup hazelnuts
- 1 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 1 cup blackberries
- 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 8 oz. chanterelle mushrooms

- 2 oz. fresh or frozen fava beans, shelled
- 4 bulbs green garlic, trimmed, outer leaves removed
- 2 cloves garlic, unpeeled
- 2 sprigs thyme
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 4 eggs
- Micro-herbs, such as dill and watercress, for garnish

Heat oven to 350°. Toss hazelnuts with oil and a pinch of salt on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet; bake until dark and fragrant, 10-12 minutes. Cool, then lightly crush; set hazelnuts aside. Mix blackberries, 1 tsp. each lemon juice, salt, and sugar and set aside. Heat 2 tbsp. butter in a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-high and cook until dark and nutty, 3 minutes. Add chanterelles, beans, green garlic, garlic cloves, thyme, salt, and pepper and cook until green garlic is caramelized, 7 minutes. Toss with remaining lemon juice and keep warm. Meanwhile, heat remaining butter in a 12" nonstick skillet over medium. Add eggs and 1 tsp. water and season with salt and pepper; cook, covered, until whites are set but yolks are still runny, about 3 minutes; divide between 4 plates. Arrange vegetables around eggs and finish with reserved blackberries and hazelnuts, and the herbs.



It's a punk-rock sandwich with a \$25 dry-cleaning bill

Trout "Reuben"

SERVES 4

COOK TIME: 2 ½ HOURS,
PLUS OVERNIGHT PICKLING

Chef Steven Brown uses pumpernickel rolls for this sandwich, but you could use any roll you like. Though this process may seem lengthy, it's worth the effort, as the trout is extremely flavorful after being brined before fried.

For the trout:

- 1½ tsp. whole black peppercorns
- ½ tsp. fennel seeds
- ½ tsp. yellow mustard seeds
- 15 whole allspice berries
- 4 cloves
- 1 whole star anise
- ⅓ cup kosher salt
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 1½ tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 1 bay leaf

- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1½ lb. boneless, skinless trout fillets,
halved crosswise

For the 10,000 Lakes Sauce:

- 6 ancho chiles
- 2 tbsp. distilled white vinegar
- 1 tbsp. kosher salt
- 1 egg yolk
- ⅔ cup canola oil
- ¼ cup ketchup
- 3 tbsp. diced dill pickles
- 1½ tsp. cayenne

For the pickled kohlrabi slaw:

- ½ cup rice wine vinegar
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 1" piece ginger, thinly sliced
- 1 3" piece lemongrass, thinly sliced
- 1 kohlrabi, peeled and julienned
- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice

- 1½ tsp. minced chives
- 1½ tsp. minced parsley
- ½ tsp. minced dill
- 2 radishes, julienned
- 1 baby bok choy, thinly sliced
- ½ honeycrisp apple, julienned
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

To serve:

- ½ cup buttermilk
- 3 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 egg
- 1 cup coarse cornmeal
- 1½ tsp. caraway seeds
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ½ cup flour
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 clove garlic, thinly sliced
- 1 small shallot, minced
- 8 slices Gruyère cheese
- 4 pumpernickel rolls, halved lengthwise and toasted

1 Brine the trout: Toast peppercorns, fennel seeds, mustard seeds, allspice, cloves, and star anise in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium-high until fragrant, 1–2 minutes. Add salt, sugar, chile flakes, bay leaf, cinnamon, and 2 cups water; cook until salt and sugar dissolve, 3 minutes. Cool, then add trout; refrigerate fish in brine for 1 hour. Remove fish from brine and pat dry. Refrigerate until ready to use.

2 Make the 10,000 Lakes Sauce: Cover chiles in boiling water; soak until soft, 10 minutes, then drain. Purée in a food processor until smooth and set aside. Mix vinegar, salt, and egg yolk in a bowl; while whisking constantly, slowly drizzle in oil until emulsified. Stir in reserved purée, the ketchup, pickles, and cayenne; refrigerate sauce until ready to use.

3 Pickle the kohlrabi: Combine vinegar, sugar, garlic, ginger, lemongrass, and ¼ cup water in a 2-qt. saucepan over high; boil. Pour over kohlrabi and cool; refrigerate overnight. Drain kohlrabi and toss with olive oil, lemon juice, chives, parsley, dill, radishes, bok choy, apple, salt, and pepper; set slaw aside.

4 Make the sandwich: Heat oven to 350°. Whisk buttermilk, lemon juice, and egg in a bowl; place cornmeal and caraway seeds in another bowl and flour in a third bowl. Season trout with pepper. Working with one piece at a time, dredge trout in flour, then dip in egg mixture, coat in cornmeal, and transfer to a plate. Working in two batches, heat 2 tbsp. oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high; add half the trout, and cook 3 minutes, then flip. Add half each butter, garlic, and shallot and continue cooking, spooning butter over fish as it cooks, 2 minutes more. Transfer trout to a baking sheet and season with salt; place 2 slices Gruyère over each fillet and bake until cheese has melted, 5 minutes. Divide the kohlrabi slaw, fillets, and sauce between the rolls.

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These smoky, tender ribs (see [page 67](#) for recipe) are brushed with a tangy mustard-sorghum glaze.

A Houston Cookout with a Far East Reach

For his big all-day feasts under the Texas sun, chef **CHRIS SHEPHERD** draws on the spicy sauces, funky marinades, and far-out flavors of the city's diverse cuisines

BY YARAN NOTI
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DREW ANTHONY SMITH



Chef Chris Shepherd (top left) blackens *char siu* chicken (bottom right, see page 70 for recipe) and splashes watermelon and tomato salad with fish sauce (top right, see page 68 for recipe).



T

ell Chris Shepherd that you've never been to Houston and in an instant you're an exchange student and he's your host dad. He stops at nothing less than full immersion. The chef puts on his apron, fires up his grill, and as he prepares an Asian-inflected menu for

one of his frequent Sunday get-togethers, begins the lessons.

Tunes from country singer-songwriter Lyle Lovett and rapper Paul Wall, both Houston-born, blare from his iPhone. He hands me a Topo Chico sparkling water and puts in a pickup order at a nearby Shipley's, a donut chain that sells warm Eastern European pastries called kolaches, here filled with sausage and cheese (it's a Czexas thing). Soon come the rapid-fire fun facts about his hometown:

The most diverse city in the country? Houston, he claims. The first word said on the moon? Houston. You'd never guess it, but do you know where a lot of Dutch folks are moving to these days? Houston. By lunch, I'm having fake memories about old ball games at the Astrodome.

At his restaurant, Underbelly, Shepherd has a bold statement printed at the top of his menu: "Houston is the new American Creole city of the South." Using the word "Creole" in a more general sense, to describe the mixing of disparate cultures, Shepherd is explaining that he cooks a version of Houston food derived from the culinary traditions of the enormous ethnic populations that live there. This plus-sized white guy, raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma, cooks what he calls Houston cuisine, and instead of barbecue brisket he makes stewy braised goat with rice-cake-like

A group of seven people are sitting in a swimming pool at night. They are all holding drinks, mostly wine and beer. The pool has a blue and white tiled edge. In the background, there is a house with a balcony and some greenery. The scene is lit with warm, ambient light.

**“My food is a gateway drug,”
says Shepherd.
It’s an invitation to
explore the other flavors
of his beloved city.**

Local Flavor

For Shepherd’s guide to Houston’s best off-the-beaten-path food, go to saveur.com/houston.

dumplings, red curry with pork belly, and fried, turmeric-marinated grouper served over rice noodles, all seasoned from a coterie of flavorings—Chinese five spice, fish sauce, *gochujang* (the spicy fermented Korean condiment)—not widely used in Texas cowboy cookery.

A lot of chefs travel the world doing *stages* (chef-speak for unpaid internships) in temples of haute cuisine, but not Shepherd. “I staged at local Indian and Thai restaurants,” he says. Beginning as a culinary student at the city’s Art Institute, he ate his way through local mom-and-pop shops observing how today’s Houstonians, one quarter of whom are foreign-born, cook.

“I would go in and be like, ‘I want this, this, and this,’” Shepherd says. “The guy would be like, ‘Okay, okay, and not for you.’ They thought I couldn’t handle it.” But after persuading them to serve him pickled sausage and stinky beans—and consuming them by the plateful—the chef made inroads. “I’m not a small man and some of these places only have a four-burner stove, a fryer, and four little Thai ladies who don’t speak English. I’m standing there in the corner, and they’re looking at me like, ‘Why are you here?’ But they started to trust me, and they taught me.”

Underbelly is closed on Sundays, and even though its staff members work together all week, they often spend their day off in each other’s company eating and drinking bourbon. Shepherd sometimes joins, or, when not entertaining, he stays home observing No Pants Sundays. (“I met my downstairs neighbor while I was on my balcony, in my underwear, eating a bowl of pho,” he says. “I love spending Sundays that way.”)

As his restaurant family arrives—folks from Underbelly and his two other establishments, Hay Merchant, a craft beer bar, and Blacksmith, a coffee shop—the chef’s hands are in constant motion tossing charred cabbage with a tangy *nuoc mam* dressing, rubbing pork collar with a cilantro-based marinade before laying it on the flaming grill, and delicately slicing tender, mirin-marinated flank steak.

Someone—one of the fresh-faced restaurant folks with a never-explained nickname

like Nugget or Spider Monkey—pops open a bottle of W.L. Weller bourbon and offers it to Shepherd. He takes a few swigs and starts brushing an enormous slab of ham ribs on the grill with a mustard–fish sauce glaze, then grabs chopsticks to arrange crunchy marinated cucumbers on top of soba noodles for his way-better-than-your-average-pasta-salad pasta salad.

“Mama Tran wouldn’t approve!” jokes Lesa Tran Lu about her stickler mother, an expert in Chinese cuisine, when the succulent *char siu* chicken comes off the grill. The chicken is pink from sitting in a marinade of vinegar, sugar, Chinese five spice, and untraditional beet powder. Lu, the child of Vietnam War refugees, is a chemist at Rice University and Shepherd’s “Yoda of fermentation.” She helps hone his in-house pickling operation, and he, in turn, has lectured her classes about the science of food. Shepherd admits he’s afraid of Mama Tran’s opinion, but he reminds himself that he doesn’t claim to be an authentic Asian chef. He’s only making an introduction: “My food is a gateway drug,” he says.

He may be the only chef with a website guiding patrons to go elsewhere: to the awesome little Sichuan place, to the spot with his favorite bowl of pho, to the rice bakery with Houston’s best kimchi. He also may be the only chef who drives a Chevy Silverado and paints his toenails; who is as conversant in Asian ingredients as he is in the Houston Texans’ O-line; who is a trained sommelier and prefers his bourbon straight from the bottle; and who lectures at a prestigious university but doesn’t like pants.

I ask Shepherd if he would characterize his food as American, and his response zigs and zags from 17th- and 18th-century immigration patterns in the South to cooking with pig’s blood. Finally, he talks himself into a definitive answer: yes.

Shoeless now, apron off, shorts thankfully still on, Shepherd has his hands full. In one, he’s swirling a glass of 2005 Châteauneuf-du-Pape by its dainty stem, and with the other he grabs a perfectly pink piece of the flank steak, tops it with some of his Coca-Cola–pickled onions, wraps it in a lettuce leaf, and drops the culture-crossing bite in his mouth. “Now that’s love,” he says. ■

Mustard-Glazed Ham Ribs

SERVES 6
PHOTO ON PAGE 64
COOK TIME: 5 ½ HOURS,
PLUS 3 DAYS BRINING

A three-day brining, smoking, and charring process adds incredible flavor to these ribs. The result tastes like grilled bacon.

- 2 cups brown sugar
- 1½ cups kosher salt
- 2 tbsp. curing salt no. 1 (amazon.com)
- 2 racks St. Louis-style pork spareribs (about 6 lb. total)
- Apple or pecan wood shavings, for smoking
- ¾ cup sorghum syrup
- ½ cup Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp. yellow mustard seeds
- ½ tbsp. fish sauce
- ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- Thinly sliced scallions, for garnish

1 Heat brown sugar, salts, and 1 gallon water in an 8-qt. saucepan over high, stirring until sugar and salts dissolve, 3–5 minutes; let brine cool completely and add ribs. Cover and refrigerate for 3 days. Remove ribs, discarding brine, and pat dry. Prepare stovetop smoker according to manufacturer’s instructions, using apple or pecan wood shavings; place rack with ribs inside and smoke for 5 hours.

2 Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium.) Cook ribs, turning as needed, until charred all over, 10–12 minutes. Let ribs rest 10 minutes, then cut into individual pieces. Meanwhile, simmer sorghum, Dijon, mustard seeds, fish sauce, and black pepper in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium until reduced to ⅔ cup, about 20 minutes. Toss ribs with glaze and transfer to a serving platter; garnish with scallions.



Watermelon, Feta, and Jalapeño Salad

SERVES 6
PHOTO ON PAGE 65
COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES

For a Southeast Asian spin, Chris Shepherd adds fish sauce, chile, and Thai basil to the classic combination of watermelon and feta.

- 2 tbsp. fish sauce
- 1 1/2 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 2 tsp. honey
- 3 shallots (1 roughly chopped, 2 thinly sliced)
- 1 clove garlic, roughly chopped
- 1 red Thai chile, stemmed
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 12 oz. watermelon flesh, cut into 2 1/2" x 1 1/2" rectangles
- 1/4 cup crumbled feta
- 2 vine-ripe tomatoes, cored and quartered
- 1 jalapeño, stemmed and thinly sliced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/4 cup mint leaves
- 1/4 cup torn basil leaves, preferably Thai
- 3 scallions, thinly sliced

Purée fish sauce, lime juice, honey, chopped shallot, the garlic, and chile in a blender until smooth; with the motor running, slowly drizzle in oil until emulsified. Toss dressing with watermelon, feta, tomatoes, jalapeño, salt, and pepper in a bowl; transfer to a serving platter and top with sliced shallots, the herbs, and scallions.

Vietnamese-Style Pork Collar

SERVES 6
COOK TIME: 1 1/2 HOURS, PLUS 4 HOURS MARINATING

Pork collar is a great cut for a long marinade and a quick cook time—it gets nice and crispy on the outside and stays juicy inside, thanks to its marbled fat.

- 1/4 cup fish sauce
- 1/4 cup fresh lime juice
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled
- 2 serrano peppers, stemmed and roughly chopped

- 1 bunch cilantro, roughly chopped
- 1 bunch scallions, roughly chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 3 lb. boneless pork collar or shoulder, trimmed
- Sliced cucumber, lettuce, and tomato, for serving

1 Purée fish sauce, lime juice, sugar, garlic, serranos, cilantro, scallions, salt, and pepper in a blender until smooth; transfer to a bowl with pork, cover, and refrigerate at least 4 hours or up to overnight.

2 Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium.) Remove pork from marinade, pat dry with paper towels, and season with salt and pepper; grill, turning as needed, until slightly charred and cooked to medium, 1 hour and 15 minutes or until an instant-read thermometer inserted into thickest part of the pork reads 140°. Let pork rest 10 minutes; slice against the grain into 1/2"-thick slices. Serve with sliced cucumber, lettuce, and tomato.

Charred Cabbage Slaw

SERVES 4-6
COOK TIME: 25 MINUTES

In this offbeat slaw, raw red cabbage adds a textural contrast to the grilled green cabbage, and a zippy, spicy-sweet-salty dressing goes well with the charred bits.

- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup fish sauce
- 2 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 1 tsp. sambal oelek (amazon.com)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 head green cabbage, cut into 8 wedges
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 red Thai chiles, stemmed and minced
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/4 head red cabbage, thinly sliced

1 Heat sugar, fish sauce, lime juice, sambal oelek, garlic, and 2 tbsp. water in a 2-qt. saucepan over high; simmer until sugar has dissolved, 2-3 minutes. Remove dressing from heat and cool.

2 Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium.) Brush oil on green cabbage wedges and season with salt and pepper; grill, turning as needed, until charred all over, 18-20 minutes. Let cool slightly, then core and thinly slice. Toss with reserved dressing, the chiles, onion, and red cabbage.

The outdoor barbecue is a hands-on affair, with friends donning aprons to cook and serve food, like the pork collar (middle), and Shepherd mixing the cabbage slaw sans utensils (bottom).

The peach agrodolce will keep in the refrigerator for up to one week. Use it on meats, grilled fruit, and ice cream.

Grilled Cantaloupe with Peach Agrodolce

SERVES 6
COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

This elegant dessert is dead-simple to make: Cantaloupe is grilled until it caramelizes and is then dressed with agrodolce, a sour-sweet Italian sauce made by reducing vinegar and sugar.

- 1 cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup apple cider vinegar
- 2 peaches, peeled, pitted, and diced
- 1 large cantaloupe, peeled, halved, and seeded, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ "-thick slices
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil
- 1 pint blueberries
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup torn basil leaves, for garnish

1 Bring sugar, vinegar, and peaches to a simmer in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium; cook until peaches are softened and liquid is reduced by half, 10-12 minutes. Set agrodolce aside.

2 Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium.) Toss cantaloupe with oil and, working in batches, grill, turning once, until charred all over, 10-12 minutes; transfer to a serving platter with blueberries. Drizzle with agrodolce, season with salt and pepper, and garnish with basil.



The Coca-Cola-pickled onions for this flank steak are also delicious with other grilled meats, sandwiches, and soft cheeses.

Grilled Flank Steak with Coca-Cola-Pickled Onions

SERVES 4-6; COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES, PLUS 6 HOURS MARINATING

In Korea, lettuce is often used as a crisp wrapper for bulgogi (marinated beef). Here, sweeter pickled onions take the place of spicy kimchi.

- 6 tbsp. gochujang (hmart.com)
- 3 tbsp. mirin
- 1 tbsp. plus ½ cup soy sauce
- 2 tsp. toasted sesame oil
- 4 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 1" piece ginger, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 2-lb. flank steak
- 2 tbsp. sambal oelek (amazon.com)
- 1 12-oz. can Coca-Cola
- ½ cup cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 2 large red onions, thinly sliced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 heads butter lettuce, leaves separated

1 Pulse gochujang, mirin, 1 tbsp. soy sauce, the sesame oil, garlic, and ginger in a food processor until smooth. Transfer to a bowl with steak, cover, and refrigerate at least 6 hours or up to overnight.

2 Simmer remaining soy sauce, the sambal oelek, and Coca-Cola in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium until reduced by ⅔, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in vinegar and lime juice; pour over onions in a sterilized 1-qt. glass jar with lid. Let sit uncovered 2 hours; cover and refrigerate until ready to use, or for up to 2 weeks.

3 Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. (Alternatively,

heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium.) Remove steak from marinade, pat dry with paper towels, and season with salt and pepper; grill, turning as needed, until slightly charred and cooked to desired doneness, 6-8 minutes for medium-rare or until an instant-read thermometer inserted into thickest part of the steak reads 125°. Let steak rest 10 minutes; thinly slice against the grain. To serve, wrap steak slices and pickled onions in lettuce leaves.

Char Siu Chicken

SERVES 4-6; PHOTO ON PAGE 65
COOK TIME: 25 MINUTES, PLUS 2 DAYS MARINATING

Char siu (meaning "fork roast") is typical in Chinese cuisine and normally gets its red hue from food coloring. In this rendition, beet powder, a natural alternative, lends the bright red color and adds a little sweetness (see "Nature's Food Coloring," page 83).

- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ¼ cup honey
- ¼ cup ketchup
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 3 tbsp. beet powder (soschefs.com)
- 2 tbsp. rice vinegar
- 1 tbsp. hoisin sauce
- ½ tsp. Chinese five spice powder
- 1 4-lb. chicken, halved lengthwise, backbone discarded
- 2 tbsp. canola oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 Mix sugar, honey, ketchup, soy sauce, beet powder, vinegar, hoisin, and Chinese five spice in a bowl. Toss marinade with chicken, cover, and refrigerate for 2 days.

2 Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. (Alternatively,

heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium.) Remove chicken from marinade, rub with oil, and season with salt and pepper; grill skin-side down, turning once, until charred and cooked through, about 30-35 minutes, or until an instant-read thermometer inserted into thickest part of the thigh reads 165°. Transfer chicken to a cutting board and let rest 15 minutes before carving.

Soba Salad with Marinated Cucumber and Ponzu

SERVES 6; PHOTO ON PAGE 71
COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

Instead of the cookout-classic pasta salad, Chris Shepherd serves this refreshing Asian noodle dish zipped up with crunchy vegetables.

- ¾ cup cilantro leaves, roughly chopped
- ¼ cup plus 2 tbsp. mirin
- ¼ cup plus 2 tbsp. rice wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 ½ tsp. fish sauce
- 1 English cucumber, sliced ⅛" thick
- 1 red bell pepper, minced
- 1 red Thai chile, thinly sliced
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 8-oz. package dried buckwheat soba noodles
- 1 cup soy sauce
- 1 tbsp. granulated sugar
- ¼ cup toasted sesame oil
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice, preferably Meyer
- 2 tbsp. bonito flakes (amazon.com)
- Mint and Thai basil leaves, for garnish

1 Mix cilantro, ¼ cup each mirin and vinegar, the brown sugar, fish sauce, cucumber, bell pepper, chile, onion, salt, and pepper in a bowl and set cucumber mixture aside.

2 Bring a 6-qt. pot of salted water to a boil; cook noodles until al dente, 4 minutes. Drain and transfer to a bowl of ice water to stop cooking; drain and spread on paper towels to dry. Bring remaining vinegar, ½ cup soy sauce, the granulated sugar, and ½ cup water to a boil in a 2-qt. saucepan over high; remove from heat and let cool. Toss vinegar mixture with noodles and the sesame oil and transfer to a serving bowl; top with reserved cucumber mixture. Bring remaining mirin and soy, plus the lemon juice, to a boil in a 2-qt. saucepan. Remove from heat and add bonito flakes; let cool, then strain ponzu. Drizzle over noodles and garnish with mint and basil.



Ponzu, a soy-based Japanese condiment, is typically store-bought, but the homemade version for this soba salad (see page 70 for recipe) uses fresh citrus for a brighter, tangier taste.

The American

There's a lot to like on little **LUMMI ISLAND** in the remote Pacific Northwest: wild salmon, endless sea views, bushes bursting with berries—and a small restaurant with big ambitions

By ADAM SACHS

Photographs by CHARITY BURGGRAAF



Archipelago

Somewhere on a small and placid island at the edge of America, two men in an octagonal wooden house are drinking vintage port and discussing Trinidadian steel drums, Alain Passard, and the taste of wild salmonberries.

“Don’t mention the drums,” Blaine Wetzel says. His meditative hobby, he’s aware, too perfectly completes the portrait of the crunchy young foraging chef who lives in an octagonal

house equipped with a woodshop and cider press, kombucha fermenting in casks in the greenhouse, and a sauna out back.

In truth, Wetzel’s not much troubled by the image. He landed on Lummi—which rhymes with “tummy” and is named for the native tribe that no longer inhabits these eleven square miles of towering firs and cedars, hilly microfarms, and shingled cabins, ringed by a single main road and finely pebbled beaches—five years ago.



Local fishermen haul in their ice-cold, perfectly fresh daily catch to the many fishing shacks that line the pebbly beaches of Lummi Island.

“Coming here, cooking here—it completely changed how I think about food, **what I think food is.**”



Coming off a three-year stint at Noma in Copenhagen, he was eager to move back to his home state and figured he would work one season at The Willows Inn (a place he'd never seen before answering an online want ad) and then move down to Seattle to find a “real” job. What happened instead was that he fell instantly in love with the place. Fell for the apples that tasted like apples. The sensitive pork farmer who bought five handles of vodka and got his hogs sloshed and happy before slaughter. The wild salmon that swims into the reef-netting of fishermen down the hill. The bushes thick with found berries—wild thimble berries, currants, gooseberries, black raspberries, and tart, blushing red salmonberries so delicate you had to have “butterfly fingers” to pick them.

“There’s a connection here I’ve never felt anywhere else,” Wetzel says. “When you’re working at top restaurants you get quality ingredients delivered to you, but that’s so different from really knowing your neighbor, who’s just some passionate dude who loves to raise sheep, caring for a few animals in a pristine pasture on an island. Here you can pull vegetables out of the ground and the taste is just mind-blowing. Coming here, cooking here—it’s been like discovering food for me. It completely changed how I think about food, what I think food *is.*”

Wetzel pours us a little more port, which, for obscure reasons, he’s decanted into an elegant Japanese teapot. His house, a five-minute walk from Willows, was hand-built in the ’70s and exudes eccentric homesteader charm. There’s a freestanding Scandinavian fireplace in one corner, an upright piano in another. Cookbooks piled everywhere. Passard—the stylishly neckerchiefed chef of Paris’ famed L’Arpège—looks down somewhat incongruously upon this woodsy nest from a black-and-white framed photo hung above a magnetic knife rack in the kitchen. Through the kitchen window, a bald eagle can be seen circling low over West Shore Drive. The bird casts its regal gaze across dandelion-dotted lawns and the dappled blue waters beyond. I nibble on some heartnuts. What’s a heartnut? Good question. Native to Japan, it’s a variety of walnut with a delicate,

twin-pronged kernel that resembles a tiny wishbone. Raw, they’ve got none of the bitterness you associate with a standard walnut, plus they look pretty. A perfect nibbling nut. Wetzel sources his heartnuts from a man known to him as Gurubani, who runs an off-the-grid farm collective near the Sauk River on the mainland.

“I went to see him one day and he’s got this compound of huts in the woods, an awesome shanty town he’s built, staffed by interns,” Wetzel says. “The first thing that struck me was he was wearing giant wooden shoes.”

Now Gurubani and his interns drop by the kitchen once a week with a carefully curated and cleaned haul of wild berries, barks, bog plants, perennials, and weeds, many of which Wetzel has never seen before: a leafy green named Good King Henry, breakfast kale, beach cabbage, Bishop’s Weed, yarrow, a tart succulent called sedum.

Once smitten with the bounty and rhythms of life on the island, Wetzel decided not just to stay, but to double down. He built a farm up the road to supply the restaurant with all the beets, exotic cabbages, delicate greens, bright little radishes, and sunchokes it can use, every vegetable tailored and grown to his own exacting specifications. He brought in a partner to buy out the owner of Willows. And he set himself the slightly nutty goal of turning a century-old, wisteria-enveloped inn with a 26-seat dining room on a sleepy island most people have never heard of into one of the most exciting places to eat in America.

Everyone waves to everyone else on Lummi Island. “You gotta wave,” Wetzel confirms. “If you don’t wave you’re a dick.” A sign at the ferry dock says: SLOW DOWN. So I coast slowly around the island, saluting each car I meet, which isn’t many.

A soft carpet of pine needles and fragrant, freshly cut grass lines the looping road around town. I follow it past the reef-net fishing pontoons and the tidy post office and town store, past mossy Volvos parked in steep driveways, driftwood fences festooned with buoys. A sign says GOLDEN RETRIEVER X-ING. Another: PARKING FOR NORWEGIANS ONLY. I take Seacrest Drive up into the mountainous, mostly unpopulated southern end of the island, the car radio tuned to bad pop floating down from Vancouver. It doesn’t take long to get the full tour and soon I realize I’m passing familiar landmarks. Driving in circles suits me fine. One day in and I have acclimated fully to the drowsy tempo of life on Lummi.

I head over to Willows and find Wetzel and his team prepping for dinner. It’s late afternoon. The sun is high and benevolent. There’s a fire in the grill outside by the parking lot, the crackle of birch and alder harmonizing with the sound of water lapping at the shore far below. The phonebooth-sized smokehouse is full today: black cod, salmon, trays of tiny mussels, and cured lamb belly, all bathing in the cool smoke of wet green alder.

(continued on [page 80](#))



Clockwise from top: Chef Blaine Wetzel gets the fire ready at Frank's beach; a charred escarole and apple salad (see [page 77](#) for recipe); and grilled marinated shiitakes (see [page 78](#) for recipe). Opposite: Loganita Farms, which supplies the restaurant.





These verjus-brined pork chops (see [page 77](#) for recipe) are accompanied by charred leeks, which are drizzled with vinaigrette and wrapped in foil before they hit the grates. Opposite: Wetzel manning the grill in front of his outdoor smoker at The Willows Inn.



Verjus-Brined Pork Chops with Marinated Leeks

SERVES 4; PHOTO ON [PAGE 76](#)
COOK TIME: 1 HOUR,
PLUS OVERNIGHT MARINATING

Verjus, the unfermented juice of pressed unripe grapes, lends a subtle, sweet-tart bite to these chops. A slightly sweeter vinegar like rice vinegar is a fine substitute.

- 1/2 cup whole juniper berries
- 2 cups verjus
- 1/2 cup plus 2 tbsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 5 sprigs flat-leaf parsley
- 5 sprigs marjoram
- 4 1 1/2"-thick double-cut pork chops (1 1/4 lb.)
- 1 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup champagne vinegar
- 12 baby leeks or scallions, cleaned and trimmed
- Freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste

1 Toast juniper berries in a small skillet over medium-high, swirling, until

fragrant, 5 minutes. Transfer to a food processor and blend with verjus, 1/2 cup salt, the sugar, parsley, marjoram, and 1/2 cup water until smooth. Pour into a large bowl and add pork chops. Cover and refrigerate at least 12 hours or overnight.

2 Meanwhile, marinate the leeks: Stir remaining 2 tbsp. salt, olive oil and vinegar in a bowl until emulsified. Add leeks, cover with plastic wrap, and marinate for 2 hours.

3 Drain pork chops and set aside for 30 minutes to come to room temperature; reserve the marinade. Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium.) Grill the pork chops, turning and basting every 5 minutes with reserved marinade, until a thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the meat reads 140°, 40–45 minutes. Transfer the pork chops to a cutting board and let rest for 10 minutes.

4 Meanwhile, remove leeks from vinaigrette and arrange on a sheet of foil. Pour 2 tbsp. vinaigrette over leeks, and then fold and close foil into a packet; reserve remaining vinaigrette. Place packet on grill and cook until leeks are soft and caramelized, 8–10 minutes.

Open packet and transfer leeks to a serving platter; discard foil. Drizzle leeks with some of the remaining vinaigrette and season with pepper. Slice pork chops and serve with the grilled leeks.

Charred Escarole Salad

SERVES 4; PHOTO ON [PAGE 75](#)
COOK TIME: 20 MINUTES

At The Willows Inn, chef Blaine Wetzel presents a version of this chopped salad as a composed dish. Tossing the hot, just-grilled escarole and apples with the cold vinaigrette intensifies the flavor of the vinegar.

- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 2 red apples, such as Gala, cored and cut into thin wedges
- 1 head escarole, halved lengthwise
- 1 Vidalia onion, cut into thin wedges
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/4 cup lightly packed oregano leaves

1 Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium.) Toss the oil, apples,

escarole, onion, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Grill apple and onion wedges, turning, until charred, 12 minutes. Add the escarole and grill, turning once, until charred and all vegetables are tender, 3 minutes more.

2 Transfer vegetables to a cutting board and let stand for 5 minutes. Roughly chop apples and escarole. Add the chopped vegetables and onions to a serving bowl and toss with vinegar and oregano. Season with salt and pepper.

Marinated and Grilled Shiitakes

SERVES 4; PHOTO ON [PAGE 75](#)
COOK TIME: 1 HOUR AND 15 MINUTES,
PLUS 2 HOURS MARINATING

In this simple treatment, chef Blaine Wetzel uses a marinade of dried shiitake mushrooms and leftover stems to reinforce the flavor of their fresh counterpart.

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup plus 2 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 lb. shiitake mushrooms, cleaned, stems reserved
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup dried shiitake mushrooms ($\frac{3}{4}$ oz.)
- Flaky sea salt, to taste
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 Heat $\frac{1}{4}$ cup oil in a 4-qt. saucepan over high. Add stems and cook, stirring, until lightly browned, 2–3 minutes. Add dried shiitakes and 1 cup water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer for 1 hour.

2 Pour broth through a fine sieve into a bowl and let cool; discard solids. Stir in remaining 2 tbsp. oil and mushroom caps. Cover and marinate at room temperature for 2 hours.

3 Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium.) Remove mushroom caps from the marinade and grill, top-side down, until they begin to char, 6 minutes. Flip and grill until tender, 1–2 minutes.

Grilled Rockfish

SERVES 4; PHOTO ON [PAGE 79](#)
COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES,
PLUS 2 HOURS BRINING

Rockfish is dry-cured before grilling, which firms up its flesh, making it easier to maneuver on grill grates. Serve leftover mussels as an appetizer, tossed with a simple vinaigrette.

- 2 8-oz. skinless Pacific rockfish or cod fillets
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup kosher salt, plus more to taste
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup brown sugar
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper, plus more to taste
- 1 tsp. ground coriander
- 6 oz. rockfish or cod bones, rinsed
- 1 lb. mussels, debearded and cleaned
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 5 shiitake mushrooms
- 3 bay leaves
- Olive oil, for drizzling

1 Place fillets on a rimmed baking sheet. Stir salt, sugar, pepper, and coriander in a bowl and then spread evenly over the top and bottom of the fillets. Refrigerate for 2 hours.

2 Build a medium-heat fire in a charcoal grill, or heat a gas grill to medium. (Alternatively, heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium.) Grill fish bones until charred, 8 minutes. Transfer to a large saucepan; add mussels, wine, mushrooms, and bay leaves and bring to a boil. Cook, partially covered, until mussels open, 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove mussels, reserving for another use; discard mushrooms and bay leaves. Slowly pour broth through a cheesecloth-lined sieve set over a bowl; discard any solids. Keep the broth warm.

3 Meanwhile, rinse fillets and pat dry with paper towels. Cook fillets on the grill, without turning, until half done, 2–3 minutes. Transfer fillets to a cutting board and let stand for 5 minutes. Thinly slice fillets with the grain and arrange slices on individual plates. Lightly spoon the hot broth over slices, drizzle with oil, and serve immediately.

Flaxseed Caramels

MAKES ABOUT 16 DOZEN
PHOTO ON [PAGE 79](#)
COOK TIME: 1 HOUR

This recipe comes from an old binder of recipes dating to the 1950s, which chef Blaine Wetzel found at the inn when cleaning up for the winter close. The flaxseeds add a toasted depth and sophisticated note to these chewy caramels.

- Unsalted butter, for greasing
- 2 cups flaxseeds
- 2 cups plus 2 tbsp. heavy cream
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups plus 2 tbsp. granulated sugar
- 1 cup plus $2\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp. flaxseed oil (amazon.com)
- 1 cup dark brown sugar
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup evaporated milk

1 Heat oven to 350°. Grease a 9"x13" metal baking pan and line with parchment paper. Stir flaxseeds and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water in a bowl, then spread into an even layer on parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Bake, stirring occasionally, until crisp and dark, 30 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool. Spread 2 tbsp. of the flaxseeds on the bottom of the prepared baking pan. Reserve remaining flaxseeds.

2 Stir cream, granulated sugar, oil, brown sugar, corn syrup, and evaporated milk in a 4-qt. saucepan. Attach a candy thermometer to the pan and heat over medium-high. Cook the syrup, stirring occasionally, until it turns dark amber and reaches 242°, about 20 minutes.

3 Remove the pan from heat and stir in $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of the reserved flaxseeds. Working quickly, pour caramel in prepared baking pan. Sprinkle remaining 6 tbsp. flaxseeds over caramel; refrigerate until set, about 4 hours.

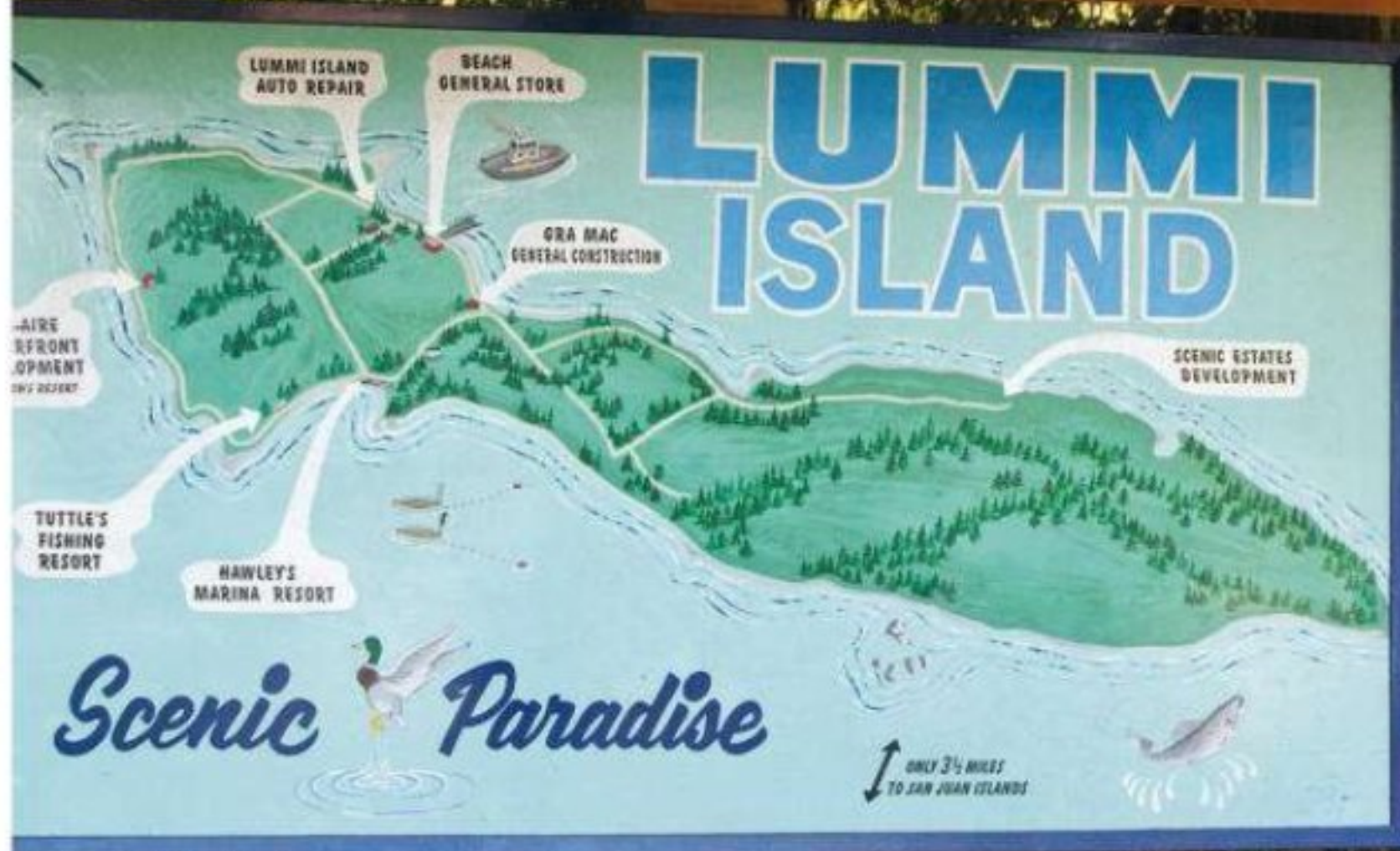
4 Using the parchment paper as a guide, remove caramels from the baking pan and cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ " cubes while chilled. Serve chilled or at room temperature.

Getting to Lummi and The Willows Inn

Lummi Island is accessible from the mainland by a five-minute ferry ride from Bellingham, Washington, which is a three-hour drive north from Seattle or a two-hour drive south from Vancouver and is home to an international airport. The Willows Inn comprises seven guest rooms in the main building, where the restaurant is located, and eleven freestanding units. It is closed in January and February. 2579 W. Shore Drive, 360-758-2620, willows-inn.com.



The ferry (top left) transports visitors to Lummi Island, where, at The Willows Inn (bottom left), flaxseed caramels (left, see [page 78](#) for recipe) are among the specialties. Wetzel lightly cures rockfish (above, see [page 78](#) for recipe) before grilling.





(continued from page 74) At the grill, a cook named Nick is rolling turnips directly in the embers. Once they're nicely charred and cooked through, the roots will be peeled—leaving a few sticky burnt bits around the edges for character—then halved and marinated in lovage-infused whey. Then five hours in the dehydrator and, just before they're served, the withered turnips are slaked with a grilled shiitake broth and garnished with toasted mustard seeds and tiny marjoram leaves.

"It sounds super simple, but it's a killer dish," Nick says.

I laugh—because of course it doesn't sound simple at all. Later, though, encountering this dish at dinner, I see what he means. The taste is clear, dazzlingly direct, the essence of turnipness expertly coaxed forward by all this burning and slow-drying and careful reconstituting. Who knew a lowly turnip could possess this meaty depth of character, such goddamned swagger? In course after course I saw this: Through rigor, patience, dutiful attention, and plain smarts, Wetzel finds ways to accentuate the nobility of pedestrian-seeming ingredients, to make them sing. A single shiitake,

the mushrooms collected twice a week from a farm in Bellingham, is dunked in shiitake broth, dried in the sun and then grilled at high heat. Shrimp toast—a trio of wobbly fat wild spot prawns set on toasted rye bread—couldn't look simpler, and in a way it is just what it seems. The only "trick" to getting food to perform this way is knowing what to do: Get all your seafood from a one-boat "old-school burly-assed Irish fisherman" who knows all the spots around Orcas Island and beyond and who carries his catches directly from the boat up the beach and into your kitchen. And what not to do: Don't fuss with the good stuff once you have it. Brush the raw meat of the prawns with a simple prawn butter made from their shells and then let them relax for a spell at the mouth of the bread oven, just enough to barely warm them and give them a louche, buttery sheen.

One of the ways coming to Lummi has changed him, Wetzel says, is that he's no longer turned on by luxury ingredients or showy technique. "What I want to do is just share the tastes of this place with everyone who comes," he says. "I don't need to be a technical or creative genius. I just want

Wetzel is the champion of unheralded strains of chicories and cabbages, poster boy for a kind of cooking that is **unique, naturalistic, stripped of unnecessary frillery**

to show people real food, to share the experience of what we're lucky enough to get to eat here."

He used to want to be the fancy chef in a fancy restaurant. This was his training. Now he is the champion of unheralded strains of chicories and cabbages, poster boy for a kind of American cooking that is unique, naturalistic, stripped of unnecessary frillery. He's intense in a laid-back sort of way. He won a James Beard Rising Star Chef award last year and promptly lost the medal. ("We found it later that night on the dance floor, being danced on.")

The accidental innkeeper, Wetzel finds himself the ringleader of a tightknit brigade of utterly earnest skateboarding, foraging, tinkering young cooks, servers, and farmers feeding two dozen people a night in a little dining room floating above the Rosario Strait like the prow of a ship.

There's a moment at dinner when the sun gets low and the light pours through the windows with blinding intensity. After the snacks in the lounge (kale chips dotted with Olympic peninsula truffle, a warm

donut-type thing filled with meltingly soft black cod), it's salmon time. The fish has been lounging in the low heat of the smoker all day. The bite is small, sweet, and rich. And there squinting into the honeyed light, I hear myself murmuring. Out loud. Talking to my food. And I'm not the only one. The low hum of contentment spreads across a roomful of people drinking tea made of birch bark, wondering at the ethereal intensity of a single mussel (smoked over alder, brushed with mussel stock and seared on a hot plancha, then paired with a bit of creamy, roasted sunflower root), unable to think of another place in this big country where we'd rather be right now.

We're just throwing rocks off a mountain," Wetzel observes, throwing a rock off a mountain.

"Throwing rocks into the sea? That's a real thing up here. That's a nice way to spend your day."

For once the sea is out of sight. We're spending part of our day hiking through Baker Preserve, a lovely fern-filled

sanctuary near the center of the island with a slightly prehistoric feeling.

"This island was the historical berry-picking grounds for the Lummi tribe," Wetzel says. They fished these salmon-filled waters, harvested the fruit of the land. "Generations and generations of natives helped the berries grow by picking some over others, spreading seeds, pulling out what they didn't like—this is why we've got such a variety here now."

Wetzel talks regularly with culinary historians at the Northwest Indian College, looking for insight and clues into traditions and secrets of the culinary topography of this edible paradise.

"What we cook is a reaction to what's happening here on the island. A reaction to people you meet, to what grows well here, to the experience of tasting things as they were hundreds of years ago. All of that culminates in the food of the Willows."

Tonight the restaurant is closed, so the kitchen crew plan to cook dinner for themselves on the beach. It's a not uncommon occurrence: Life on a small island means you hire people you like to cook with on your days off.

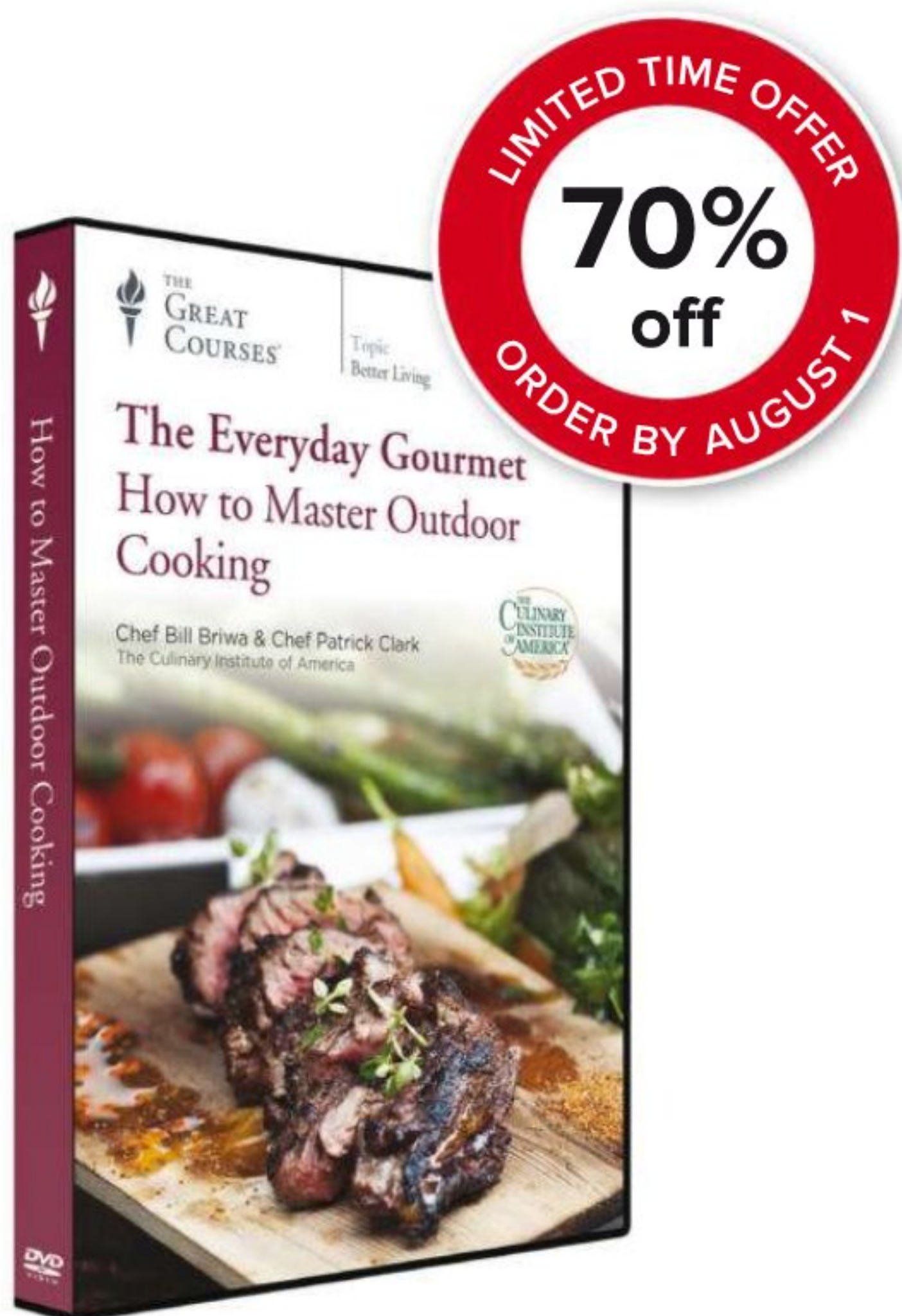
As the sun begins its slow descent over the gulf islands of British Columbia, the merry band—boys in hoodies, girls in big nautically themed sweaters—sets to work on a casual weeknight feast. Shigoku oysters are shucked and set on ice. Cold bottles of Oregon white are opened, drained, replaced. Wetzel improvises a grill by the water: a rough circle of lanky, gnarled gray logs in the sand, a small grate set over burning wood. He pokes it with a found branch that looks like a shepherd's walking stick. The fat chops of those happy drunk pigs that the chef helped to butcher have been marinated in verjus and juniper berries. Leeks are tossed with oil and thrown on the grill in foil packs. Someone's brought frilly horsetail stalks, plucked from the roadside, curious to know how they taste. Potatoes confited in oil, then smashed flat, are set to crisp on the grill. More wine. Some beer.

It's dark now. Another lovely Lummi sunset come to a close. The coals of the fire glow red in the gentle, cool breeze. The name Lummi is thought by some to have been coined by Spaniards who approached by these seas and witnessed bonfires like this on the shore: *Luminara*.

Wetzel places a dozen wavy-lipped oysters in the fire. As they pop open and release a burp of steam, he pulls them out and we eat them from the hot shells. The meat is plump, full of smoky juice. Again a chorus of contented murmurs.

Wetzel smiles. "The idea of putting oysters right into the coals and just forgetting about them and eating them as they are?" he says. "I don't know if that translates to a magazine, but in real life it's awesome." ■

Chef Blaine Wetzel (middle) hanging out on the beach with staffers from The Willows Inn and its restaurant.



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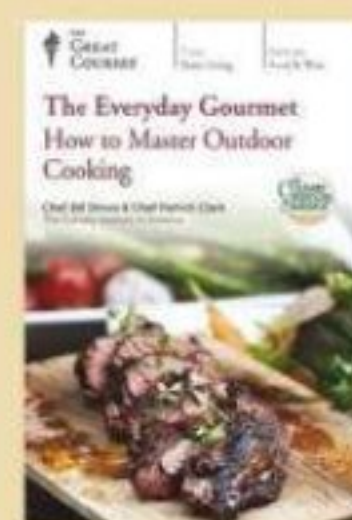
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• FROM THE SAVEUR •

TEST KITCHEN

For this issue, our test kitchen staff stuffed miles of sausage casings, tamed innumerable charcoal fires, and made pretty pink food dye from beets

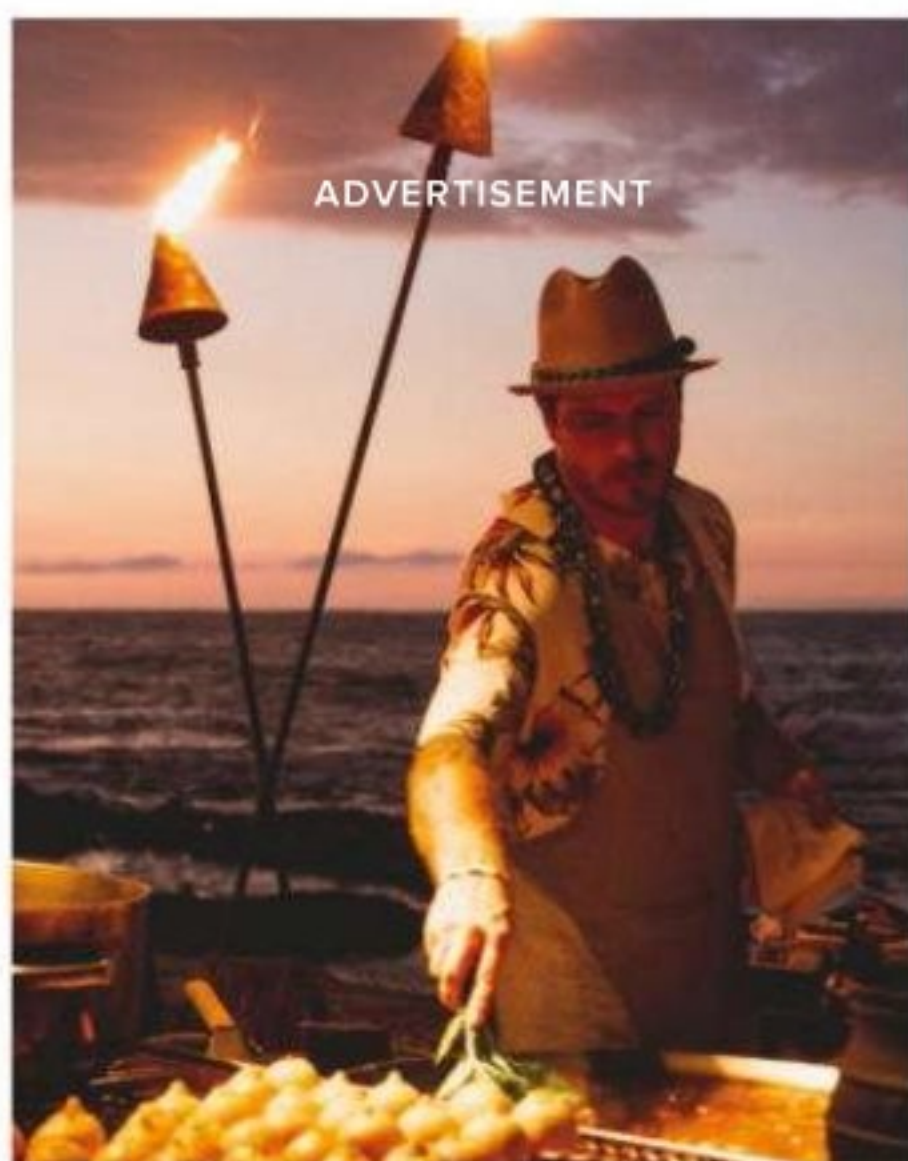
Nature's Food Coloring

For dyeing savory dishes or sweet colorful frosting, nothing beats homemade beet powder

Chef Chris Shepherd uses beet powder, pictured above, made from pulverized dried beets, to give his *char siu* chicken (see [page 70](#) for recipe) a distinctive pinkish hue that typically comes from chemically produced red food dye. Similarly, the ingredient can color everything from pickling liquid and aioli to baked goods and frosting. “It adds an inherent sweetness,” says Shepherd, “but it’s not a strong flavor.” To make it: Spread 1 lb. peeled beets, sliced paper-thin, on a Silpat-lined baking sheet and bake at 200° for 2 hours. Alternatively, use a dehydrator set to 150° for 3 hours. Place dried beet slices in a food processor and purée until finely ground. Makes 2 tablespoons.

To re-create the frosting colors at right (from bottom), use 2 tsp., 1 tsp., ½ tsp., and ¼ tsp. beet powder per ½ cup frosting.

MATT TAYLOR-GROSS



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TEST KITCHEN

DIY SAUSAGE

A MINI PRIMER ON MAKING YOUR OWN SAUSAGE
(SEE "A BEAUTIFUL GRIND," PAGE 34)

How to Choose the Correct Casing

When making Russell Moore's sausages, we used hog and sheep casings. Hog casings, a sturdy option for larger sausages, like Moore's boudin blanc (see page 38 for recipe), come in a variety of diameters: 1 1/8-1 1/4" for frankfurters, 1 3/8-1 1/2" for bratwurst, and 2 1/4" if you want to make traditional black pudding. Sheep casings, which are more delicate, are best for smaller sausages like breakfast varieties, or Moore's garlic and herb sausage (see page 38 for recipe). These natural casings, if packed in salt, should be rinsed and soaked in lukewarm water for 24 hours before using. If submerged in brine, 15-30 minutes of soaking will do. Synthetic varieties are less expensive and ready for immediate use, no cleaning necessary, but you'll want to steer clear of those made from cellulose—they are not safe to eat. —Elizabeth Unger

The Right Stuff(er)

Because those hog intestines
aren't going to stuff themselves



To stuff our sausages (see page 38 for recipes), we used a reliable sausage-stuffing attachment that affixes to any KitchenAid stand mixer. If you don't have a stand mixer, the Weston 3-lb. manual sausage stuffer, left (\$55, amazon.com), is an inexpensive yet durable choice, and, if you want to splurge, the LEM Stainless Steel Vertical Sausage Stuffer, right (\$155, lemproducts.com), is Moore's preferred tool.

Russell Moore's Secrets to Killer Sausages

"Fat is key. Pork belly or jowl makes a creamier, juicier sausage. Fat back doesn't really melt, so use it when you're making a more textured, country-style sausage."

"Keep your meat and fat cold. If the mixture gets warm before grinding, the fat will smear and then drip out during cooking, resulting in a tough sausage. Same goes for mixing: Your hands will warm up everything pretty quickly, so don't overdo it."

"Err on the side of under-stuffing, because you can always twist sausages to get them to the right shape. If you pack them too tight, they'll burst."

"Cook a little piece to test for seasoning before stuffing. But then don't futz: Try to get the flavor right in one shot, so you don't keep remixing the meat."



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MATT TAYLOR-GROSS; ILLUSTRATION: SHANA TOROK

Essential Grilling Cookbooks



Get fired up for grilling season with these recent releases



Mallmann on Fire: 100 Recipes

BY FRANCIS MALLMANN & PETER KAMINSKY (ARTISAN, 2014)

Mallmann, a well-respected Argentinian wood-fire fanatic, traverses the world collecting inspiration from places as varied as Patagonia and Brooklyn. He arms readers with international recipes and tips ranging from the basic to the adventurous (like how to cook a lamb leg suspended from a tree).

TIP: Add any chopped herbs you like to room-temperature olive oil and refrigerate overnight. The oil will partially solidify in the fridge, and by morning you'll have a mild, aromatic spread—similar in texture to soft butter—to add to just-off-the-grill food.

Feeding the Fire

BY JOE CARROLL & NICK FAUCHALD (ARTISAN, 2015)

Carroll, the restaurateur behind Philadelphia's Fette Sau and New York's St. Anselm, breaks down grilling and smoking into 20 chapter-lessons—"Wood Is an Ingredient," "You Can Grill Before Noon"—that teach readers fundamental techniques they can use to experiment with grilling on their own.

TIP: Slather grilled corn with compound cream cheese instead of butter. The cheese, seasoned with za'atar or any herbs and spices you like, adds tang and sticks to the ears better.

Sean Brock's Secret Weapon



While Charleston chef Sean Brock insists that a store-bought barbecue sauce will work perfectly well on his ribs (see [page 52](#) for recipe), we prefer the homemade Carolina-style version adapted from his book, *Heritage* (Artisan, 2014).

MAKES 1 1/4 CUPS
COOK TIME: 30 MINUTES

- 1/2 cup pork or chicken stock
- 2 1/2 cups cider vinegar
- 3/4 cup ketchup
- 2 1/2 tbsp. light brown sugar
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tbsp. smoked paprika
- 3/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. onion powder
- 1/4 tsp. chile powder

Heat all ingredients in a 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high; simmer, stirring occasionally, until reduced by 2/3, about 30 minutes. Sauce will keep, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

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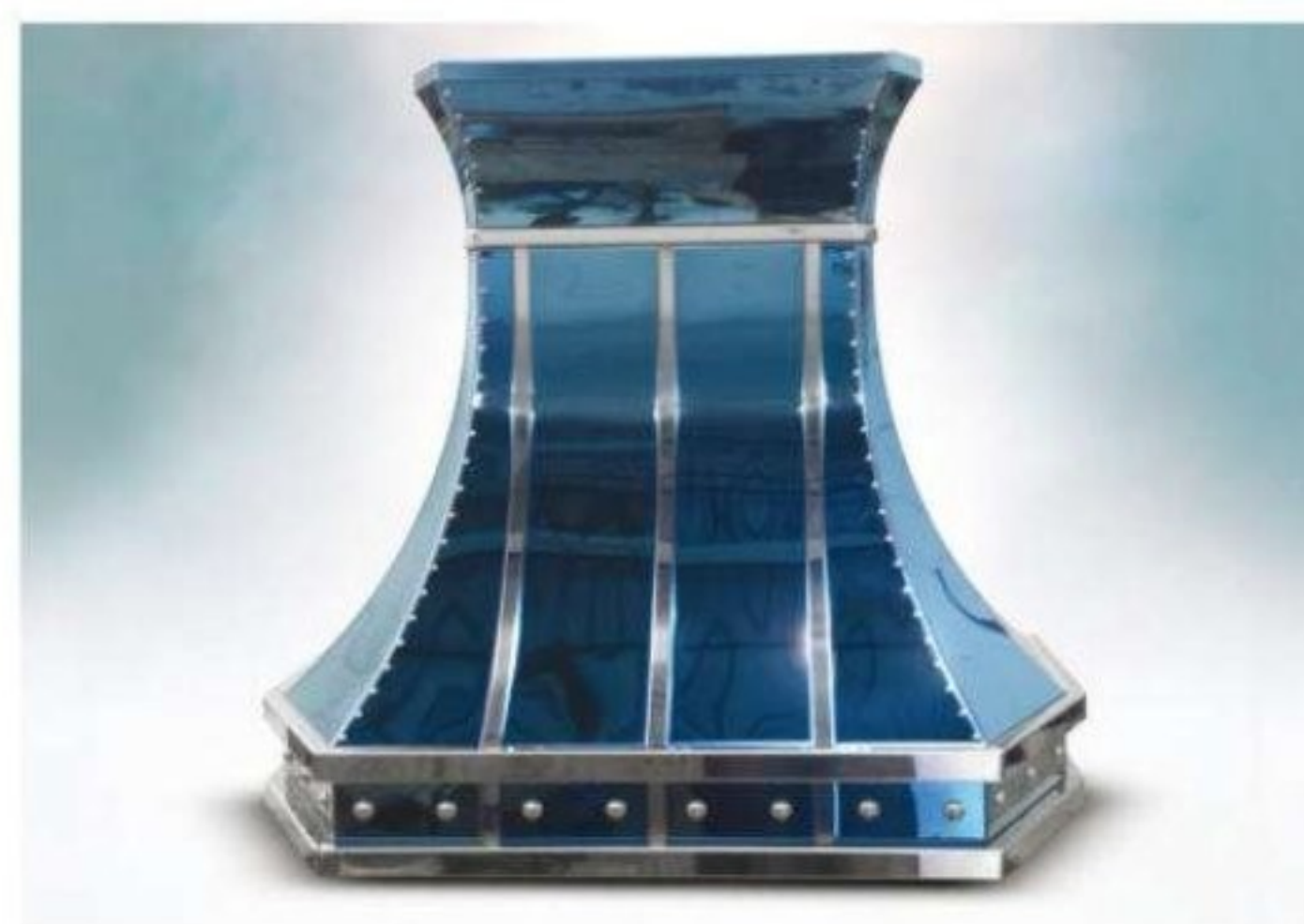


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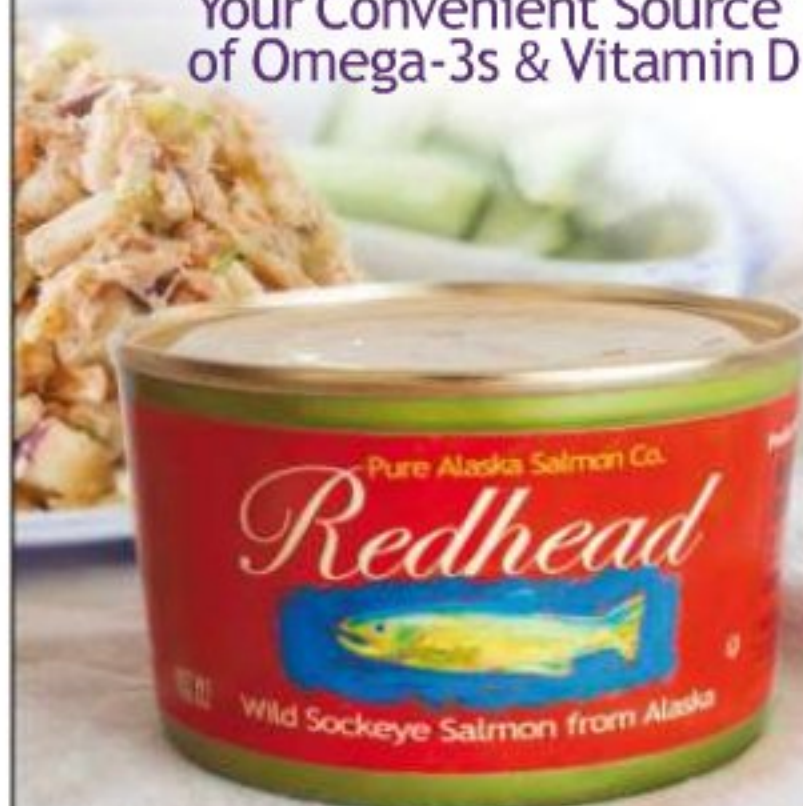
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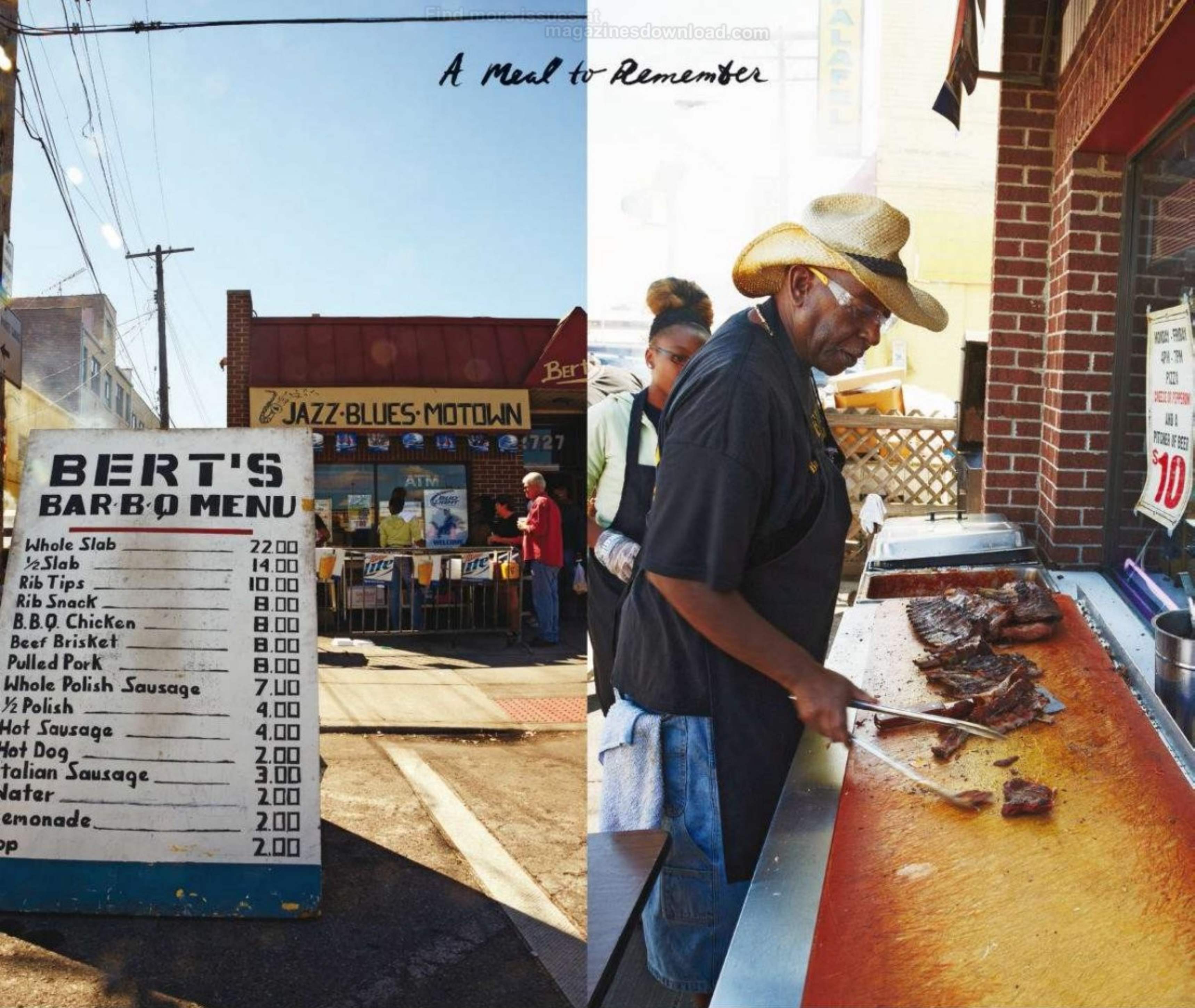


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BERT'S MARKETPLACE, 2727 RUSSELL STREET, DETROIT, MICHIGAN, SEPTEMBER 15, 2012

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTINA HOLMES

When I visit my friend Craig in Detroit, going to Bert's is our thing. We always shop for produce at Eastern Market, and then the overwhelming smell of smoke inevitably pulls us across the street to the old-school barbecue joint. There's a line of five massive drums outside—a sea of black pits and so much smoke it's hard to see the crisp-golden, slightly charred chickens and thick racks of pork ribs glistening as they cook. Tony is always there, in a straw cowboy hat and wraparound glasses, tending to the pits and cutting board all day. I order the ribs, my favorite. Tony grabs an enormous rack from the grill and cuts through it with a big knife. I swear he cuts a million a day. He douses them with sauce and hands me a plate with a wide smile and a nod. Craig and I take seats by the windowsill so we can hear the jazz drifting from inside. We talk about the future of Eastern Market. There's so much gentrification now; will a chain take over? Will Bert's still be here? I take a forkful of smoky, perfectly sweet baked beans and then a sip of lemonade. It's a little sugary, but I love my lemonade a little sugary. It's a sweet scene at Bert's—every time I go, it's always the same.



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